

ROCK AGAINST THE WAR ■ ALTAR CALL FOR RUDY ■ POLYGLOT PLAYBOOK

JUNE 4, 2007

The American Conservative

IRAN **Getting Past the Paranoia**



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A REAL REAGANITE

In David Wiegel's article (May 7), John Hawkins—the founder of RightWing News and an adviser to GOP presidential candidate Duncan Hunter—is quoted as saying, “[Ron] Paul's our Dennis Kucinich. He's not a conservative. He's a libertarian. He's a kook, and his supporters are pretty obnoxious.” Since Hunter likes to call himself a “Reagan Republican,” perhaps it would be fitting if he (and Hawkins) considered the following statement on libertarianism from the late president: “If you analyze it I believe the very heart and soul of conservatism is libertarianism. ... The basis of conservatism is a desire for less government interference or less centralized authority or more individual freedom and this is a pretty general description also of what libertarianism is. ... I think that libertarianism and conservatism are traveling the same path.”

Far from being a “kook,” Congressman Paul is the only principled Constitutionalist in the presidential race. He is a pro-life libertarian who has opposed the war in Iraq from the very beginning and opposes amnesty and the provision of welfare services for illegal aliens. If the Stupid Party really wants to challenge the status quo, and finally end the warfare-welfare state, it should nominate Ron Paul for president.

DEEPINDER GILL

Via e-mail

VERY, VERY PALEO

I have a very strong sympathy for Dr. Peter Wood's concerns about the present American educational system and its possible influence on the rest of the world (“Exporting Idiocracy,” May 7), but as a Chinese citizen, I am more worried about the trend in China to learn everything American.

I have a few questions about some points he makes in this article. First, he mentions the ancient Chinese Imperial

Examination system, but he doesn't elaborate on his view of it. This system has been an easy target for Westerners, for, due to its emphasis on memorization, it allegedly harms the development of a free mind. The arguments that are commonly given are precisely the kind of “Deweyan” ideas that Wood ridicules. It seems then that he should be in favor of the Chinese system, which is still followed in today's China to some extent. Of course, adaptations are needed, such as emphasizing more creative work in higher education, improving the curriculum and the designs of examination, etc.

Second, Wood lists a few evils of today's China. They are only side issues in this excellent article, although they may please many American conservatives or radical activists. It's difficult for me to imagine that North Korea is considered a “buddy” even by the Chinese government, as he claims. It is more of a nuisance and a card one can play in realpolitik. One may well wonder why China doesn't topple this member of the axis of evil. But one has to remember that North Korea is a poor country, not really friendly to China, with nothing other than a few missiles and millions of people ready to move out. The only reasonable choice for China, and for democratic South Korea, is to guide the North toward gradual market reform. In addition, the support of the Khmer Rouge by the Chinese government after the Mao era may have been aimed at creating troubles for Vietnam, and as far as I know, the American government also supported it for a similar reason.

A more serious issue I have is Wood's complaint about China's failure to adopt American niceties like an elected government. But if we understand the theoretical impossibility of a large-sized and populous country having an informed, educated, politically competent, and unified majority—a precondition for a functioning democracy—and if we see

empirically how American democracy has deteriorated to its present form, and how democracies have proven a failure in so many developing countries, can we be so sanguine about exporting American-style democracy?

A hybrid regime, combining the democratic elements such as popular elections and the rule of law and protection of liberties with some form of authentic compassionate (paternalistic) elitism, both temporarily and in the foreseeable future, might be an alternative superior to the American system. To be clear, this is neither a position of the present Chinese government nor a defense of it, but a very paleoconservative position. By “very paleo,” I mean thinkers like Confucius or Plato, whose challenges to complete democratic participation have never been adequately answered by the moderns.

TONGDONG BAI

Cincinnati, Ohio

THE DERSH DEFENSE

Alan Dershowitz's campaign to pressure DePaul University into denying tenure to Professor Norman Finkelstein may be malicious and vindictive, but it is understandable considering that Finkelstein exposed Dershowitz's works on Israel as plagiarized third-rate polemics (May 7). Whether he is defending O.J. Simpson or Israel, Dershowitz seems true to the principle he once articulated: “It is the job of the defense attorney—especially when representing the guilty—to prevent, by all lawful means, the ‘whole truth’ from coming out.”

JOHN DIRLIK

Via e-mail

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[MEMORIAM]

A SON'S SACRIFICE

Every death in Iraq is tragic. But the May 13 loss of 1st Lt. Andrew J. Bacevich, 27, killed by a suicide bomber in Samarra, shook us deeply. It's a name we know well: his father, whose latest essay appears in this issue, has been one of the most thoughtful conservative critics of the Iraq War and a generous friend of this magazine since its infant days.

With signature grace, Andy never advertised his son's service, never traded on his sacrifice. But neither did the elder Bacevich, himself a former Army colonel, shy from using his substantial gifts to oppose a war he considers "not only wrong, but also stupid."

We have never felt its futility more and send our deepest condolences to the Bacevich family.

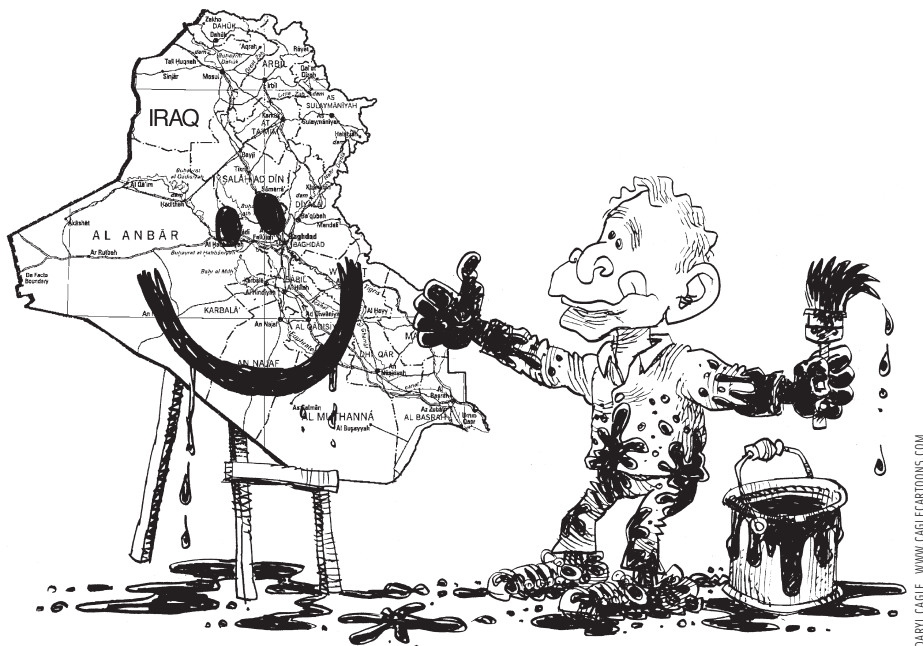
[ELECTION]

WAR AGAINST ALL

A telling moment in both televised GOP presidential debates came when Mitt Romney put on an amazing display of geopolitical gibberish—and none of his rivals saw fit to call him on it. Romney argued that the United States is not just at war with al-Qaeda but with a large slice of the world's Muslims—"This is about Shi'a and Sunni. This is about Hezbollah, and Hamas, and ... the Muslim Brotherhood" who want to replace all moderate governments with "a caliphate."

There are some pretty vital distinctions glossed over here. The Muslim Brotherhood is a civil-society organization that eschews terrorism and has no wish to attack the United States. Hezbollah, a Shia organization in Lebanon, and Hamas on the West Bank are enemies of Israel but have no wish or reason to be enemies of ours. None of these groups would comfortably fit into any caliphate with the others.

The United States won the Cold War in great part by making distinctions



between communists and socialists and between Yugoslav and Chinese and Soviet communism and exploiting these splits to its advantage. Romney instead wants to conflate all conceivable Islamic movements, add Israel's foes to our own list, and unite them all under some made-up term—Islamofascism—so America can be forever at war with all of the Muslim world.

George W. Bush made the same kind of error by falsely linking Saddam Hussein to al-Qaeda and plunging America into a war against a country that had nothing to do with 9/11. Instead of learning from the mistake, Romney has now twice demonstrated that he wants to repeat it—with interest. Sad to say, the leading GOP contenders seem ready to follow suit.

[BELTWAY]

SHUT UP & STAND DOWN

While the president sings hosannas to democracy abroad, members of his party fear a little democracy at home. Eleven Republican congressmen recently staged an intervention of their own at the White House. In what Rep. Ray LaHood called "a no-holds-barred meeting," the lawmakers told the president that he has so little credibility that

General Petraeus must speak on Iraq War policy, not the commander in chief. And these GOP dissenters aren't the only ones. Sen. Chuck Hagel told "Face the Nation," "[they] speak for more than just 11 House Republicans. That's just the tip of the iceberg."

In best don't-believe-your-eyes style, Tony Snow countered, "This is not one of those great cresting moments when party discontents are coming in to read the president the riot act." He doth protest too much. During the meeting, Rep. Tom Davis related that the president's approval rating was at 5 percent in one section of his northern Virginia district.

Dick Cheney, always intransigent, declared, "We didn't get elected to be popular." But single-digit support and jittery congressman should be a sign that the people see what the administration refuses to acknowledge: Small adjustments in policy are not enough. We must bring our involvement in Iraq to an end.

[IRAQ]

DESERT WANDERING

The cakewalk caucus was so preoccupied with the ideological dimensions of its grand design for Iraq that it didn't count the human cost. Apparently mil-

lions of Iraqis were supposed to wait patiently—jobless and homeless—while we built a democratic Disneyland.

On some level, the two million who have fled are lucky: they escaped with their heads. But little else. The professional class, those citizens with the skills and resources vital for reconstructing a livable society, was first to go. It won't soon return. Meanwhile, the 50,000-70,000 new refugees displaced each month pile unsustainable pressure on Iraq's neighbors, riven with sectarian struggles of their own and straining to manage the humanitarian crisis.

Questioned for a *New York Times Magazine* article, former UN Ambassador John Bolton claimed that the refugees have "absolutely nothing to do with our overthrow of Saddam." Further, "our obligation was to give them new institutions and provide security. We have fulfilled that obligation. I don't think we have an obligation to compensate for the hardships of war." Delusions come easy in an air-conditioned office at the American Enterprise Institute.

Congress isn't washing its hands quite so quickly: the Responsibility to Iraqi Refugees Act currently under consideration would increase by 20,000 the number of Iraqi refugees eligible to immigrate to the U.S. in the next two years. (In a tragicomic twist, the legislation makes special provision for "vulnerable" groups like gay Iraqis—as if average citizens tortured to death with power tools aren't sufficiently persecuted.) Thus the conservative dilemma: of course, the U.S. can't absorb the millions of Iraqis set adrift by our folly, but neither can we pretend that actions don't have consequences.

The *Times* relates that in the no-man's land near the Syrian entry point of Tanf, a baby recently born to refugee parents was named Khiyam, which translates "tents." Don't expect him to grow up loving America.

[TERROR]

HEY, DIDN'T WE LIBERATE YOU?

It's not clear how far along the Fort Dix jihadis were in their plot to launch an attack on the New Jersey base. But if this seemingly harebrained scheme—the target was chosen because one of the alleged plotters used to deliver pizza there—proves to be a major instance of the terror threat we're combating on a global basis, it has some pretty unusual aspects.

Many Americans, hearing that the alleged plotters were "former Yugoslavs," surely assumed initially that some Serbs, angry that the United States had bombed their country in 1999 in order to help out the Kosovar Albanians, had decided to wreak a crazy kind of revenge. But no, it turns out that the pepperoni jihadists were members of the very ethnic group we mobilized our air power to support: ethnic Albanian Muslims.

If you believe what was written in *The Weekly Standard* and *The New Republic* when they were beating the war drums on behalf of the Muslim Kosovo Liberation Army, this group was largely made up of Balkan George Washingtons and Martin Luther Kings.

The Serbs withdrew from their province in the face of American and NATO bombardment. Today, nearly independent Kosovo is a mess and has substituted ethnic cleansing of Serbian Christians for the ethnic cleansing of Kosovar Muslims.

Now some of these Muslims, far from being content with their new little state in the Balkans, are living in America and plotting *jihad* against the very Army that liberated them. There are several lessons to be drawn from the episode, but perhaps the most obvious is that intervening in someone else's civil war is not an enterprise that elicits much gratitude from either side. ■

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Bear Baiting

Who lost Russia? This may be one of the questions of the decade if relations continue their downhill slide.

Today, as Condoleeza Rice flies to Moscow for talks with President Putin, a *Washington Times* story, datelined Tbilisi, begins, “Emboldened by its growing alliance with the United States, Georgia is increasing pressure on two separatist territories that have bedeviled it since it gained independence from the Soviet Union.”

The “separatist territories” are Abkhazia (pop. 200,000), an old Russian resort area on the Black Sea, and South Ossetia (pop. 50,000). Both enclaves border on Russia as well as Georgia.

“Although the territories are small,” writes the *Times*, “the conflicts have a superpower dimension reminiscent of the Cold War.”

“Russia backs the separatists in both territories, while the U.S. has given substantial support to Georgia, including help in training and reforming the military.”

Georgia is now backing a new pro-Tbilisi regime in South Ossetia and a government-in-exile for Abkhazia and vows to bring both back to Georgian rule by 2009. The separatists are trying to escalate their conflict with Tbilisi into a Washington-Moscow collision.

Says Sergey Shamba, foreign minister of Abkhazia’s breakaway regime, “The U.S. and NATO give Georgia military support and, because of that support, Georgian authorities conducted that operation [in Upper Abkhazia] and destabilized the situation. So there’s only one way out, the military option.”

Query: what is the U.S. military doing in the birthplace of Joe Stalin? What is the vital interest in Georgia that has us

training its military? To fight whom?

Can we not understand the rage of the Russians at what we have been up to?

We brought six former Warsaw Pact nations into NATO: East Germany, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria. Then we brought in three Soviet republics: Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia. Now NATO expansionists want to bring in Ukraine and Georgia.

Why are we moving a U.S.-led military alliance into the front yard and onto the side porch of a nation with thousands of nukes? How would the Union have reacted if, after the Confederacy won independence, the Royal Navy put bases in Charleston and New Orleans, the British army trained troops in Tennessee, and half the Confederate states entered a military alliance with Lord Palmerston’s Britain?

Have we forgotten that General Grant sent Sheridan and 50,000 U.S. troops to the Mexican border in 1865, and Seward told Napoleon II to get his army out, or we were coming in? Can we not understand that other nations might want their own Monroe Doctrine?

President Bush has junked the Nixon ABM Treaty and is putting anti-missile missiles in Poland and radar in the Czech Republic. We say they are to defend us against Iran. But Iran has no ICBM.

Estonia has just enraged Moscow by removing a World War II statue of a Red Army soldier and the remains of 14 soldiers from the heart of Tallinn to a suburban cemetery. The perceived insult has ignited anti-Estonian demonstrations in Russia. Bush’s response? He has

invited the Estonian president to the White House.

Why is he involving us in quarrels that are none of our business?

The United States has also colluded with Azerbaijan and Georgia on a pipeline to ship Caspian Sea oil to Turkey, bypassing Russia. Dick Cheney, on a trip to commune with that great democrat Nursultan Nazarbayev, former first secretary of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, ripped Russia for backsliding on democracy.

After helping dump over a government we did not like in Serbia, our Neocomintern—the National Endowment for Democracy, Freedom House, and other fronts—interfered in Ukraine and Georgia, helping to oust pro-Moscow regimes and install pro-American ones. Since then, NED has been on a losing streak, routed in Belarus, with its subsidiaries about to get the boot from Moscow.

Can we blame the Russians for being angry? How would we react to a nest of left-wing NGOs in Washington, flush with Beijing’s boodle, aiding and abetting elements hostile to the Bush administration?

Truman is often condemned for having started the Cold War. This is an historic libel. Indeed, Harry was late, mighty late, to recognize just who “Good Old Joe” really was and what he was up to. But if Harry did not start the first Cold War, George W. and the neocons have a strong claim to having started the second.

A first order of business of the next president should be to repair the damage this crowd has done to Russian relations. And the way to begin is by getting NATO out of Russia’s front yard. Respect Russia’s turf, as we would like her to respect ours. ■

[myths unveiled]

Iran: Past the Paranoia

At once theocratic, secular, hostile, and modern, Iran is not America's natural enemy.

By Peter Hitchens

THE STORY OF THE cardboard tanks was a haunting urban myth of 1930s Britain, often recalled by adults during my 1950s childhood. It concerned a middle-class couple who took a motor tour of the Third Reich about the time of the Munich Agreement. As they drove their very solid, very British automobile along a twisting mountain road, they suddenly came face to face with a squadron of Hitler's feared new tanks. It was too late to stop, too narrow to swerve. Commending their souls to God, the couple braced themselves for certain death. But death did not come—only a strange splintering noise and some strangled cries of “*Achtung!*” and “*Engländer Schweinehund!*” The tank was a mere mock-up, made of cardboard, bamboo, string, and chewing gum, and the couple sliced through it, quite unhurt. This tale, wholly false, was told 70 years ago to spread foolish complacency about the real peril of German rearmament. It was retold 50 years ago to remind us how gullible we had been about a dangerous enemy.

It concerns me now as I write about a recent visit to Iran, the country that has been designated as the next official enemy of what is still called “The West.” I came away so completely opposed to this silly hostility that I fear

I am in danger of stirring up apathy, like the people who spread the myth of the cardboard Panzers. I am a Cold War veteran who believes in deterrence and accepts that there was a genuine Soviet threat. I am an incorrigible Zionist. I think my own country has allowed its armed forces to become lamentably weak. But I think the difference between the official account of Iran as sinister menace and the Iran I experienced is so great that it is a sort of duty to draw attention to it.

This general fear is so strong that members of my own family, used to my traveling to many curious corners of the world and much-traveled themselves, were apprehensive about my going to Tehran. Feelings were a little high at the time. A group of Royal Navy bluejackets and Marines had just been seized by Iranian Revolutionary Guards in the waters off Basra and released after alleged ill treatment. These trained warriors spoke of their experiences as if they had been held in the dungeons of man-eating pirates, claiming to have been scared of torture and, in the case of the one woman involved, of rape. So terror-stricken had they been that they allowed themselves to be filmed more or less admitting to losing their way and rambling into Iranian waters. One had

been persuaded to pen a letter denouncing Britain's military presence in Iraq. Their subsequent fate—sudden release after an apparent deal, the sale by some of them of their pathetic memoirs to mass-circulation newspapers, a national revulsion against them for their general feebleness—is interesting in itself, but it is not part of my story.

It seemed to me to be a good time to go to Iran, a country currently moving toward the top of the Anglosphere's list of Most Hated Nations. This list, frequently revised, is maintained by those who feel a pressing need for a national enemy and who have been bereft of a proper foe since the Soviet Union fell in on itself in a cloud of rust. Iran's leaders, unlike several of the regimes chosen for the role of Chief Threat, seem to enjoy being feared and have encouraged their image by very publicly pursuing nuclear research, rather like a naughty boy teasingly juggling with his mother's best china.

The ayatollahs do not encourage foreign journalists to visit and declined to give me a press visa. So I went unofficially, unsupervised by official minders, and was able to travel in a great sweep round the country, journeying to within a few miles of the Afghan border and close to the Persian Gulf.

I met anti-regime intellectuals in fashionable cafés, ordinary provincial professional people in their own homes, devout Muslims and fierce skeptics, regular consumers of illegal alcohol, religious zealots, students, and feminists facing prosecution. I attended Friday prayers in Tehran, the weekly 20 minutes hate in which a large congregation is encouraged to bawl “Death to America,” “Death to Israel” and—gratifyingly for a British subject used to our diminished status—“Death to England.” In Persia, at least, we are still regarded as a dangerous and perfidious world force, whose spies are generally thought to be everywhere. I reached the heart of one of Shia Islam’s most sacred shrines and saw how distinct Shia Islam is from its Sunni rival. And I was kissed on both cheeks by a bearded mullah in the holy city of Qom.

I also passed close to one of Iran’s major nuclear sites, Natanz, and was able to observe the anti-aircraft gun emplacements spread on either side of the smooth new superhighway that leads north from Esfahan to Tehran. I can imagine few more useless precautions against the pilots of the Israeli or United States air forces, except perhaps for a patrol of biplanes or some bows and arrows. But the display, visible to thousands of travelers each day, helps to fan the foolish panic about Iran’s supposed attempt to become a nuclear power.

I am not equipped to judge such things technically. I could not tell uranium from plutonium or a centrifuge from a capacitor. But I have been subjected to enough state-sponsored panics about evil dictators and weapons of mass destruction to have become a little dubious when I am told that a Middle Eastern state is plotting my imminent death or a first strike on Tel Aviv. And I have become aware that many real, well-informed experts are

highly skeptical about Iran’s ability in this field. The Tehran government appears to exaggerate the number of centrifuges it has in operation. Its capacity to enrich uranium is pitifully short of that needed to produce weapons-grade material. Its elderly nuclear reactor at Bushehr has yet to produce a watt of electricity after more than 30 years. Iran’s claim to need nuclear energy may not be false. This supposed energy superpower imposes frequent power blackouts, as I can confirm from personal experience.

MANY IRANIANS PRIVATELY FEAR THAT THEIR GOVERNMENT’S CLUMSY FUMBLINGS WITH THE ATOM WILL SUBJECT THEM TO A PERSIAN CHERNOBYL LONG BEFORE IT ENDANGERS ANYONE ELSE.

The Iranian state is, in any case, famous among its own people for being very bad at delivering grand projects. Tehran’s new Khomeini Airport has just opened after 30 years under construction. A supposedly ultra-modern TV and telecommunications tower stands unfinished on the capital’s skyline after 20 years of work. Several cities, promised metro-rail systems years ago, have yet to see a single train run. Tehran’s metro, sorely needed in that traffic-strangled megapolis, is operating a few lines, but they opened years late, and there are far too few of them.

Many Iranians privately fear that their government’s clumsy fumblings with the atom will subject them to a Persian Chernobyl long before it endangers anyone else. In any case, if you wish to become frantic about Islamic bombs, then there is surely a better case for worrying about Pakistan, which already possesses such a bomb along with the missiles to hurl it about the region. Yet Pakistan, mysteriously, is our friend and

ally, despite being a lawless military tyranny and the only country on earth to have an army unit specifically trained to mount putsches against its (rarely) elected governments.

In any event, it is idle and wrong to see Iran as part of an undifferentiated Muslim world. It is astonishingly distinct from its Arab neighbors and, come to that, from its interesting non-identical twin, Turkey. While Turkey is an Islamic state kept secular (so far) by a covert army dictatorship, Iran is a secular state kept Islamic by an overt clerical

despotism. Iranians, as they will swiftly point out to you, are mostly non-Arabs. Nor are they, apart from an important but small minority, Turks. And their espousal of the Shia rather than the Sunni branch of the faith cuts them off, whether they like it or not, from most of the rest of Islam. This divide is far more important than most of us realize. We are aware of it mainly because of the Shia majority in Iraq and the influence that Iran can exercise through them. But what I did not properly appreciate before visiting Iran is that Shia Islam is for all practical purposes a separate religion. I had, on a visit to Iraq, been lucky enough to visit the Shia shrine cities of Najaf and Kerbala but only in search of opinion on the Anglo-American occupation. I had noticed that the mosques were interestingly different from the Sunni ones I had seen in Jordan, Egypt, Jerusalem, and England but had made little of it.

In the great Shia pilgrimage city of Mashhad, on the old Silk Road to China, I understood for the first time

that this was something utterly apart, as separate from Sunni practice as a Sicilian Roman Catholic might be from a Scotch Calvinist. I have never felt so close to understanding the passionate pre-Reformation world of medieval Europe, its relics and devotees, its enormous, thronged, and gilded shrines. Passing through ever more ornate courtyards decorated with lovely blue-tiled recesses and overlooked by a dome apparently made of solid gold, I was able to look into the glittering center of the shrine of Imam Reza, one of the sad heroes of this tragic faith. All Shia martyrs were the victims of political, temporal defeat, some slain in unfair battle, others—like Reza—foully murdered by conspiratorial enemies. They are still mourned, as if these events had happened yesterday rather than more than a thousand years ago. The Twelfth Imam is thought to have disappeared from the world of men, only to reappear at an unknown date to restore the rule of peace and justice.

The martyred Reza lies in a green-shrouded tomb surrounded by a solid silver cage, which the pilgrims surge forward to touch, some crying out in a sort of ecstasy at having reached their goal. The sepulcher is approached down marvelously carpeted corridors—one for men and one for women—whose walls and ceilings are lined with thousands of tiny pieces of mirrored glass and sparkle perpetually. Many devotees force their way through the multitudes and, before they are pushed away by competing worshippers, hurriedly tie green ribbons to the silver bars, or even fix padlocks to them, in the hope of having wishes granted when the knot eventually comes loose or the lock is broken. Others push quantities of banknotes into the enclosure. Frequently, passionate funeral parties process through the precincts, as huge drums beat from the shrine's rooftops.

Shia believe that a special blessing attaches to those whose bodies are brought close to the shrine.

Something very old indeed is taking place here—something much frowned upon in the Sunni lands. Some trace connections to the ceremonies of a sect of Zoroastrianism, the great monotheistic faith that dominated Persia before the coming of Islam and still survives even now in small but persistent pockets. Whatever its origins and nature, it is not liked by the austere forms of Sunni Islam promoted by Saudi Arabia and its allies. If Shia make the pilgrimage to Mecca, they find they are sourly tolerated but not welcomed as friends.

The separation, whatever its reasons and origins, helps to reinforce a strong feeling that Iran is trapped in the middle of a world to which it does not really belong. Wander through Tehran, or any other Iranian city, at the delightful evening hour always pleasing in any Middle Eastern capital, soon after evening prayers have been called, when the sweet and cake shops are preparing for business and the lights are warm and

Clothes intended to be shapeless have been carefully nipped in and adapted to emphasize the waist, contrary to regulations. Headscarves are placed so far back on the head that they are barely there at all. Heels are high, and many walk and stand like Parisians. Every so often, squads of morality police still descend on the streets to try to enforce compulsory modesty. But the battle is undoubtedly lost. And that is important because it symbolizes the way in which the regime has failed to hold the hearts of the people in so many other ways as well.

A sort of public opinion does exist in Iran. Despite a still fearsome formal repressive apparatus, which swiftly and disgustingly punishes formal open dissent in newspapers or in street demonstrations, private conversation is quite unregulated, deeply irreverent, and totally fearless. Even in poor South Tehran, where the Islamic enthusiasts have more influence, I was told an unprintably rude joke about the Ayatollah Khomeini that suggested the old man was not very clever.

CLOTHES INTENDED TO BE SHAPELESS HAVE BEEN **CAREFULLY NIPPED IN AND ADAPTED TO EMPHASIZE THE WAIST**, CONTRARY TO REGULATIONS. **HEADSCARVES ARE PLACED SO FAR BACK ON THE HEAD THAT THEY ARE BARELY THERE AT ALL.**

bright. You will quickly notice that it is not—as it would be elsewhere—an all-male street scene. Women are walking about quite freely, and not in that hunched, submissive posture so common in the Arab lands. They are, especially in the more middle-class areas, consciously subverting the ridiculous dress codes imposed on them by the mullahs. The veil is plainly imposed, not willingly worn as it increasingly is by Arab women on the luxury shopping streets of London.

This private dissent has an interesting effect, a sort of passive resistance expressed by a lack of enthusiasm. The authorities have drawn back from the strict application of *sharia* punishments except in cities where the middle class is weak and the regime's more fanatical supporters remain strong. In Mashhad, I was assured, public executions had become rare because they were unpopular, and people would not go to watch them unless the condemned man had committed some especially heinous and

bloody crime. In private homes and in public places, the men and women to whom I spoke expressed dissenting opinions with amazing, sometimes alarming freedom. I had to ask myself from time to time whether I was in a tyranny at all.

What were those opinions? As in any proper country, they varied. I had dinner with a group of professionals, male and female, the women voluntarily veiled, where almost all said they had voted for

more liberal-minded and skeptical. Before the Iraq War, many such people were all but wishing for an American invasion to free them from the ayatollahs. But having seen what American liberation has done for Iraq and Afghanistan, they have turned away from any such thoughts.

The Islamic leadership knows this and is glad of the threats and grumbling coming from Washington. Once it was able to use the great national trauma of

the embarrassingly loyal friend of the West. In the end, his devotion to Washington was one of the things that finished him off.

There is more than one Iran, and even the passionately Islamic version should not be dismissed with scorn or distaste, though some of it remains baffling or repellent to us. One of the most articulate and intelligent people I met was a young schoolteacher, the mother of a young child. It was clear that her relationship with her husband was that of an equal. Yet as we discussed propaganda in the classroom, I was greatly struck by her extraordinary, medieval, night-black robes, so intensely somber that they darkened the well-lit room in which we sat and so emphatically, ferociously modest that they represented an unspoken, passionate argument against secular modernity and all its works. Much less persuasive or sympathetic was the bearded, taciturn man in an Esfahan ironmonger's shop close to that lovely city's tourist arcades of carpets, beaten copper, and spices. This man's wares were not so picturesque. Displayed on his shelves were the sharp, gray *zanjeer* chains employed by Shia zealots to lash themselves bloody during the fierce, miserable festival of Ashura. This marks the great defeat of Shia arms at Kerbala more than 1,300 years ago. Also on display were other, heavier chains with an equally disturbing but secular purpose. These are used as weapons and threats by the Basiji, a sort of pro-government Islamic militia that is deployed to intimidate any public expression of opposition, much as similar "people's militias" were used by Warsaw Pact states to ensure the Communist Party's rule went unchallenged.

I was also unpleasantly surprised, during an evening stroll through Mashhad, to encounter a shop entirely devoted to the sale of chadors, the

THE STUDENTS WERE **NOT IN THEMSELVES HOSTILE TO THE WEST**—LIKE ALMOST ALL IRANIANS, THEY YEARNED TO LIVE THERE. BUT THEY WARNED THAT AN **ATTACK ON IRAN WOULD DRIVE THEM CLOSER TO THEIR GOVERNMENT.**

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad for president. The women, especially the younger ones, dominated the conversation. Would they vote the same way now? Hardly any would. They had done so, in any case, in the hope of change that they had not gotten. Many now found him embarrassing and disliked his aggressive talk.

In the great square at Esfahan, I talked to a group of teenage girls about to graduate from high school—one strictly veiled, one less so, one whose scarf was subversively far back on her head. They all thought war was coming, all believed that the U.S. was not a truly free country and that Iranians and Muslims were persecuted and mistreated there. These opinions arose from state-sponsored ignorance and were fanned by our own militant hostility. The students were not in themselves hostile to the West—like almost all Iranians, they yearned to live there. They were personally friendly and open to me. But they warned that an attack on Iran would drive them closer to their government. And this was not just their view. I heard the same from many far

the war with Iraq to unite the nation around its leadership, much as the Kremlin used the war against Hitler to give itself legitimacy. Now memories of that war are growing weaker among Iran's incredibly youthful population, and something else is needed to bind the state and the people. The mullahs also wish to close the gap between Shia and Sunni so as to make a united front against the Great Satan. They are using the crudest tactics to achieve this. While ordinary Iranian Shia are coldly welcomed in Sunni lands, Mahmoud Ahamadinejad is the hero of every Muslim cabdriver from Morocco to Malaysia because of his disreputable Holocaust denial. During Friday prayers, I heard a mullah urge reconciliation between Shia and Sunni, claiming that the wicked, slippery English had been trying to split the two branches of the religion for centuries.

Now, while we should be glad that a civil society is being reborn and that Iran's alliance with the rest of the Muslim world is shaky, we should not be too optimistic or expect that we can return to the days when the shah was

enveloping black shroud favored by the mullahs. Especially disagreeable were the tiny child-sized models ranged in the window. I had just been marveling at the near-European normality of the surrounding district, its busy cinema with its mixed clientele, its wedding shops and bookstores, its bold, regulation-defying young women. And here was this reminder of how this place remains anything but normal in many important ways.

Even less normal is the holy city of Qom, headquarters of the ayatollahs, for many years the home of Khomeini himself. I was urged by some Iranians not to go there. "It is Arabia in the middle of Persia," warned a bookseller in Esfahan who had just shown me some rather rude but very beautiful prints featuring wine and young women not wearing chadors. Others just said that a sort of darkness seemed to hang over it. And yet, like so much of Iran, it was paradoxical.

I went to Qom by way of the strange shrine of Jamkaran, especially favored by President Ahmadinejad, where the fabled Hidden Imam is widely believed to be most likely to reappear. It is a rather desperate, dusty, and angry place, beloved by the very poor and the very fervent, who slog to it on foot for many miles. But in Iran such things are part of life in a way almost forgotten in the American and European world. The worldly and the otherworldly, the commercial and the spiritual, mingle happily and unselfconsciously. The modern highway that leads from Tehran to Qom is a 21st-century construction in a partly medieval land. It has electronic speed-check cameras every few miles, alternating with official signboards bearing quotations from the Koran. Devout drivers recite them to keep awake on long night journeys. Imagine I-95 overhung with signs proclaiming, "I am the way, the truth

and the life" interspersed with advertisements for Howard Johnson's.

At dusk, the half-built mosque of Jamkaran glows greenish, like a cooling spaceship on the jagged Martian landscape of the region. But beside it sparkles a garish row of shops selling the local sweetmeat, a sugary brittle made of pistachio nuts, without which no pilgrimage is complete. Picture Washington National Cathedral surrounded by stalls selling cotton candy, illuminated in primary colors, and nobody at all surprised or concerned, and you may get some impression of the effect.

The outer suburbs of Qom, likewise, are anything but holy in appearance. Hardware stores, candy outlets, and religious emporia selling the Koran at 40-percent reductions crowd the busy streets. There are parking lots the size of modest counties for pilgrim cars and coaches. Over it all towers the floodlit

ing former President Khatami had loosened the regime? These things would strengthen the Islamic Republic in the long run. The idea that Shia clerics should stay out of politics, once orthodox, was mistaken. I had to try, but we were from different worlds, unable to communicate—until he changed the subject and began to question me about the captured British sailors. He was convinced that they were spies—since I am English, he was probably convinced that I was a spy—and could not be put off this fancy by the fact that the sailors had been wearing uniforms. This was a typical English double bluff, in his view. Then a very stern look came into his eye and he asked if, when I returned home, I would behave like them, saying rude things about Iran. When I said that I rather hoped not, he suddenly gave me a great hairy kiss on both cheeks and surged off into the night, grinning to himself.

THE MODERN HIGHWAY HAS **ELECTRONIC SPEED-CHECK CAMERAS** EVERY FEW MILES, ALTERNATING WITH **OFFICIAL SIGNBOARDS BEARING QUOTATIONS FROM THE KORAN**. DEVOUT DRIVERS RECITE THEM TO KEEP AWAKE ON LONG NIGHT JOURNEYS.

gold dome of another great Shia shrine, with an entire wall of mirrored glass, shining into the warm, windy night and the green flag of militant Islam floating above. Little by little, the visitor becomes aware of the enormous number of mullahs, all bearded, all in coffee-colored robes and white turbans. There are mullahs climbing off buses with briefcases, mullahs driving cars, mullahs on motorbikes, rigidly clutching the handlebars.

Thus I had no difficulty in finding one of these holy men and having a wholly circular argument with him about the Islamic revolution. So what if the people were not enthusiastic and if the reform-

I do not want to give him, or those like him, any pleasure. Their rule is stupid, oppressive, cruel, lawless, and intolerant. Nor do I want to peddle foolish complacency, like those who invented the tale of the cardboard tanks. But I would like to give pause to all those who imagine that Iran is a place of undifferentiated evil, malice, oppression, and fanaticism, or our natural and rightful enemy. There is hope there. The difficult question is how best we might nurture it. ■

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Bushed Army

Our forces strain under a surge of new missions.

By Andrew J. Bacevich

COURTING THE SOLDIER vote during the 2000 presidential campaign, the candidate made this simple promise: "Help is on the way." Throughout the 1990s, Republicans had regularly lambasted the Clinton administration for misusing America's military and for failing to show soldiers proper respect. Electing George W. Bush was supposed to fix that.

The electoral strategy paid off handsomely: the absentee votes of soldiers helped Bush carry Florida and claim the Oval Office. Yet rather than delivering help, the Bush administration has since subjected the Armed Forces of the United States to sustained abuse. The scandal at Walter Reed is not some isolated blemish on an otherwise admirable record. It is emblematic of the way that this administration has treated soldiers.

Granted, President Bush never passes up the chance to pose with the troops or express his warm regard for those who serve and sacrifice. But to judge by results rather than posturing, no commander in chief in American history has cared less about the overall health of America's Armed Forces.

President Bush will hand over to his successor an Army and Marine Corps that are badly depleted and verging on exhaustion. The real surge is not the one that involves sending more U.S. troops to Baghdad. It is the tidal wave of unsustainable demands that are now engulfing America's ground forces.

Last year retired Gen. Colin Powell declared that the Army is "about broken." A growing chorus of other senior officers, active and retired, has chimed in,

endorsing Powell's view. Unless the Bush administration finds ways to ease the strain, retired Gen. Barry McCaffrey recently told a Senate committee, "The Army will unravel." Lt. Gen. Clyde A. Vaughn, chief of the Army National Guard, complains, "we have absolutely piecemealed our force to death."

There is plenty of evidence to support these gloomy assessments. Only a third of the regular Army's brigades qualify as combat-ready. In the reserve components, none meet that standard. When the last of the units reaches Baghdad as part of the president's strategy of escalation, the U.S. will be left without a ready-to-deploy land force reserve.

The stress of repeated combat tours is sapping the Army's lifeblood. Especially worrying is the accelerating exodus of experienced leaders. The service is currently short 3,000 commissioned officers. By next year, the number is projected to grow to 3,500. The Guard and reserves are in even worse shape. There the shortage amounts to 7,500 officers. Young West Pointers are bailing out of the Army at a rate not seen in three decades. In an effort to staunch the losses, that service has begun offering a \$20,000 bonus to newly promoted captains who agree to stay on for an additional three years. Meanwhile, as more and more officers want out, fewer and fewer want in: ROTC scholarships go unfilled for a lack of qualified applicants.

To sustain the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Pentagon has resorted to a variety of management techniques, all of which have the effect of increasing

the strains on the force and watering down its quality. In April, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates ordered the standard combat tours of Army units extended from 12 months to 15. More time in the combat zone means less time to refit and retrain between tours and to reconnect with families.

As the Army depletes its inventory of equipment—some \$212 billion worth has been destroyed, damaged, or just plain worn out—the best of what's left ends up in Iraq and Afghanistan. One consequence is that units preparing to deploy don't have the wherewithal needed to train. As military analyst Andrew Krepinevich told the Senate Armed Services Committee, "The Army is forced to play a shell game with its equipment." The problem is especially acute in National Guard and reserve units, some now being activated for second combat tours.

There's also a second shell game. The Army is incrementally easing its recruiting standards, enlisting thousands of volunteers that the service would previously have classified as unfit. Last year, the Army raised its maximum enlistment age from 35 to 40 and then to 42. The percentage of high school drop-outs entering the force has reached its highest level since 1981. The number of "CAT IV's"—potential recruits scoring at the lower end of the military's standardized aptitude test—has also spiked. Perhaps most troubling is the increase in "moral waivers" issued to would-be recruits with criminal records, a history of drug use, and the like. Between 2005 and 2006, the number of waivers that the Army issued to con-

victed felons jumped by 30 percent.

Once you get in, there's next to no chance of washing out. Whereas in 2005, the graduation rate in Army basic training was 82 percent, the following year it rose to 94 percent—a clear indication that training standards are eroding as the war drags on. Similarly, re-enlistment criteria are becoming more lax. The Pentagon proudly reports that each of the services continues to meet its re-up goals (helped, of course, by the offer of generous bonuses that are tax-free if the soldier re-enlists while overseas). By comparison, it does not broadcast the fact that the services meet those goals by permitting those with disciplinary infractions and mediocre records of performance to re-enlist.

Secretary Gates has announced plans to expand both the Army and the Marine Corps. That expansion will be modest—fewer than 100,000 overall—and it will occur over a five-year period, providing no meaningful relief to the troops currently headed back to the war zone for their second, third, and even fourth tours. Almost certainly, recruiting those additional troops will mean an even greater degradation of enlistment standards.

President Bush has nicked and dimed the nation's fighting forces to the verge of collapse. Even today he remains oblivious to the basic problem that his administration has confronted for the past four years—too much war and too few soldiers.

The president's attitude seems to be: sure, the military is overstretched, but let's see if we can stretch it just a little bit more. Perhaps he figures that when the rubber band breaks, dealing with the consequences will be someone else's problem. It's almost enough to make one nostalgic for Bill Clinton. ■

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Former Central Intelligence Agency Director George Tenet continues to come under fire for profiting directly from the Iraq War, about which he now claims to have had misgivings.

Tenet has reportedly received a \$4-million advance from HarperCollins for his book *At the Center of the Storm*, and he also commands a speaking fee of \$50,000 each time he addresses a corporate group. Tenet has a substantial government pension, and his salary from Georgetown University, where he has a three-year appointment as the Distinguished Professor in the Practice of Diplomacy in the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Diplomacy, is reported to be in the six figures. But Tenet's most significant income, an estimated \$2.3 million since 2004, derives from his participation on the boards of a number of corporations that are contractors for the intelligence and defense communities. Tenet has three key directorial positions—with L-1 Identity Solutions, which provides biometric identity software; Guidance Software, which specializes in forensics; and QuinetiQ, a British defense technology firm that was until recently owned by the Carlyle Group. Tenet has also been linked to Science Applications International Corp, a major defense and intelligence contractor. He wrote much of his book in a SAIC secure facility where he was able to work with classified documents (which raises the question of how a former CIA director continues to have access to secret material to enable him to write a for-profit book). The CIA workforce is now 60 percent contractors, nearly all of whom come from companies like those with which Tenet is associated. Contractors cost the taxpayer two to three times as much as a staff employee does, but they are frequently expensed off-line in the budget and can have their positions eliminated when their contracts expire, which is why federal government managers prefer to use them.



Col. Larry Wilkerson, former chief of staff to Colin Powell when he was secretary of state, told a May 7 gathering why Powell did not resign during President Bush's first term.

He feared that his departure would mean that the Pentagon would be completely unrestrained in its attempted reshaping of U.S. foreign policy. According to Wilkerson, the Pentagon began to interfere in the policy process very early in the Bush administration. He cited as one example the dispatch of senior Pentagon officials to Taiwan during 2001 to urge the Taiwanese leadership to declare the country independent of mainland China. Pentagon officials assured the Taiwanese that if they were to do so, the United States would adopt a "two China" policy, abandoning the current American recognition of the People's Republic as the sole legal government of China. Beijing would have reacted strongly and perhaps unpredictably to such a move. When Powell heard about the Pentagon initiative, he was livid and immediately sent senior State Department officers to Taiwan to inform them that a new China policy was not being contemplated and that Taiwan's declaring independence would not be supported by the United States.

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Mondoweiss, Chapter One

Blogging about Israel and Jewish identity raises *Observer* hackles.

By Philip Weiss

A YEAR AND A HALF AGO, I resolved to become a blogger. As a lifelong writer, I had produced journalism through a host of technologies, from carbon copies on manual typewriters to e-mail, and I didn't want the world to leave me behind. Besides, I was excited by the form. The writers were working without filters—editors—and as a result, the writing was more immediate, genuine, and personal. I wanted to try.

I also thought there might be money in it. I had covered an antiwar hearing in Congress for a glossy magazine, and the only other reporters were two or three bloggers. It seemed to me that something was wrong with the economy when one guy was making \$10,000 for an article and three guys were making nothing for providing a similar service. An efficient economy rewards people for their work; that money would have to be shared. But when I offered this analysis to Craig Newmark, the founder of craigslist.org, he shook his head. The three bloggers were all getting something out of it, he said. Maybe one guy expected to get money down the road, so it was an investment. Another was getting personal satisfaction and learning something. "Maybe the third guy is getting to express heretical views or fulfilling his idea of citizenship..."

My main outlet was *The New York Observer*, the weekly printed on orange paper, and I began bird-dogging the editor, who had long supported my work, to give me a blog on the *Observer* site and forget about print. Peter Kaplan

is old-school in more ways than one: our friendship goes back to our Harvard days in the '70s. He pointed out that readers still value what they can hold in their hands more than what they see on a screen. He was right, I said, but who could say when that paradigm was going to break?

After considerable back and forth with designers and web managers, I got my blog in March 2006. It was my editor's idea to call it Mondoweiss. Peter is charming, intuitive, and magisterial, a Flo Ziegfeld type. The way *The Observer* works is that editors knock softly on his closed door all afternoon, hoping for a minute in which he will deliver an inspirational note as he puffs on a metaphorical cigar. Peter gave me just a couple of notes as I began blogging. "You're a writer! Be a writer, write about what's on your mind!" and "Drive traffic!" He had often described his ideal of a writer to me: someone with complete confidence on the page, someone with his own special view of things and his own way of expressing it. Another time he told me to throw some pictures of my dogs on the blog. That's a blogging tradition, pet pictures.

It was understood that Peter couldn't pay me anything for the blog. *The Observer* lost money, and I figured I couldn't have my hand out when I didn't even know what I was doing.

Many of my early entries were indulgent or writerly. They had cute turns of phrase or long setups or personal anecdotes. Not for long. Blogging gave me a

clipped style. Short sentences, little imagery, simple words. Hard lessons for an old belletrist.

The pressure was awful. I felt oppressed by the need to say something interesting every day and ransacked my life for anything that might entertain readers. I related amusing stories like how I'd ruined a dinner party by getting into an argument and how my wife had later comforted me: "I'll tell you a secret, there are endless social groups. You can burn through one and still get invited to another." But really, what was so interesting about my life? Not much.

Borrowing time from remunerative activities, I wondered why I was doing it at all. Then I began to focus, writing about things I thought about naturally: the Iraq disaster and my Jewishness, and on from that to recent Jewish history, the Jewish arrival in the American establishment in my generation, Zionism, neoconservatism, Israel, Palestine. Later I noticed a commenter objecting that *The Observer* had "assigned me" to write about Jewish issues. It hadn't. I'd assigned myself.

My Jewishness has long intrigued me. I was raised in a very close-knit scientific family that had a sense of Jewish superiority. Being Jewish was the main thing I was *vis-à-vis* the world. All my friends were Jewish, and summers we went to a scientific community that was also very Jewish. Only in college did I start to break away from my background, even as I cast long looks back at the tribal.

Once, at a bris, a friend said to me, “You know why we do this?” “Well hygiene—” I started to say. “Bulls—t. We do it to show that we are different.” I struggled with that idea of difference. I sought a wider American experience and married a Christian whose background and values I felt had improved me. Though I still think of myself as being utterly Jewish in my concerns, I recognize that I’m assimilating. On good days, I think that this is the way the world is going. On bad days, I wonder if I haven’t fallen between two cultural stools.

Some of my best blogging came out of that tension. I established a thread called “the Assimilationist,” and when *Commentary* attacked the new Leonard Woolf biography, saying that he had lived a life of self-hatred in a marriage to an out-and-out anti-Semite in Virginia Woolf, I took the Woolfs’ side. Sure, intermarriage presents cultural challenges, but *Commentary* was trying to validate Jewish separation by seeing anti-Semitism behind every bush—and Gentile.

I RAISED THE ISSUE OF DUAL LOYALTY—AND POINTED OUT THAT ANTI-ZIONIST JEWS HAD OPPOSED THE CREATION OF A JEWISH STATE FOR PRECISELY THAT CONCERN.

Blogging about such matters sometimes made me feel wicked, as though I was betraying my tribe. Shouldn’t some thoughts remain private? But I felt that the form demanded transparency about what I cared about, Jewish identity.

More important, these issues had become political after 9/11. The towers fell in part because of our support for Israel’s occupation of Arab lands. Of course, after 9/11 many Americans, myself included, had experienced we’re-in-the-same-boat feelings about Israel facing suicide bombers. But that sympathy had been exploited to push aggressive, foolish policies in the Middle East. Now Israel’s policies toward the Arabs

were ours. On my blog, I raised the issue of dual loyalty—and pointed out that anti-Zionist Jews had opposed the creation of a Jewish state for precisely that concern: by extending citizenship to Jewish citizens of other lands, Israel would cast into question those Jews’ commitment to those lands. And why not raise that issue when Elliott Abrams, the top adviser to George Bush on Middle East matters, had written in 1997 that outside Israel, Jews “are to stand apart from the nation in which they live.” I did not believe that such a feeling of separateness was compatible with high office.

As I delved into these matters, I began going to Jewish lectures and devouring books about foreign policy and Jewish history. My father is an academic; now my blog empowered me as a scholar. I soon had over a hundred books, marvels like Jacob Katz’s *Out of the Ghetto* and Baruch Kimmerling’s *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness*. Every night I looked forward to lying on the couch and opening another chapter on Jewish history. I

found celebrations of the Israel lobby in Alan Dershowitz’s work and Philip Roth’s, too, and read how essential the lobby had been to the Jewish state from the start. In an obscure publication of the American Jewish Historical Society, I read a piece by Abba Eban, the eloquent UN ambassador for Israel, crowing that when Harry Truman “was in desperate trouble” in 1948, American Zionists rushed to get him money and “thereafter had fairly free access to Truman in times of crisis.”

My posts became more thoughtful, and on occasion I got more than a hundred comments. My editor said nothing, but I ascribed Peter’s silence to the fact that he had enough on his hands just to compile

the paper every week. He has a stronger Jewish identity than I do. A few years back, we were sitting in his office when he said, “You know what the most important question is about your wife’s family?” “What?” I asked. “Would they hide you?” “Huh?” “Would they hide you?” he said again. Oh. He meant if there were pogroms in America. I said they would, even though I was a little offended by the question. Jews had achieved great power and privilege in America. I did not see pogroms as a realistic possibility.

But Peter thought that American ethnicities could turn on one another like Sunnis and Shi’ites if the circumstances were right. One of his strongest intellectual influences was the late Eric Breindel, a neoconservative writer and the son of Holocaust survivors, whom we had met at *The Harvard Crimson*. I always thought Eric had a paranoid streak, but Peter saw him as brilliant. He took Eric’s views of the Middle East more seriously than my own. One of those views was mistrust for the “guys in the striped pants” (as Peter put it) in the State Department, who sold out European Jews during the Holocaust.

This is a familiar Jewish conversation, one that takes place often, even among affluent and prominent people. In his recent book *Prisoners, The New Yorker* writer Jeffrey Goldberg relates that in the 1980s he came to feel that Gentile society was dangerous for Jews and that the Diaspora being the “disease,” Israel was the “cure.” So he moved there. A Harvard friend who had gone on to media renown once related to me a visit to an ancestral village in Eastern Europe where no evidence remained of Jews. Not a grave, not a synagogue. He said, “How can you expect to engage in discussions of Jewish privilege when we know how the last such conversation ended?”

My answer is that America is different from Europe, and I thought journalists were demonstrating bad faith in our

democracy when they declined to talk about real issues surrounding the power structure—say the Israel lobby or the predominance of Jewish money in Democratic Party giving—out of fear that their group would suffer. On my blog, I made a role model of E. Digby Baltzell, the Philadelphia patrician who in the 1960s invented the word WASP to critique the Protestant establishment, his own group, as exclusive and anti-Semitic. Shouldn't today's elite enjoy the same sort of scrutiny?

There was another reason Peter had nothing to say about the blog: he was busy trying to sell the newspaper. The founding owner, Arthur Carter, had it on the block, and Peter, who loved his job and owned a small piece of the paper, was helping to shop it. For a while the rumor mills said that *The Observer* would be bought by the actor Robert DeNiro and his producing partner. Then the next thing I knew, a tall, lanky Harvard grad named Jared Kushner, scion of a New Jersey real-estate family that was active in Jersey politics, was buying the paper.

Peter mentioned that the Kushners were observant Jews, and I found an online video file of Kushner at Harvard dedicating the new Chabad House, named for the sect of Hasidic Jews that originated in Lithuania 300 years ago. In the video, a handsome, besuited Kushner turned the microphone over to Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz.

Bad news for me. I had nothing against the Hasidim; I'm respectful of them. But their position on Israel tends to be biblical and anti-Arab. They are even connected to illegal settlements in the occupied territories. And Dershowitz is, of course, a leading hardliner on Israel.

I spent some time with Peter during the transition, offering him a friend's counsel, and I said that Kushner and I wouldn't mix. "I should get out now and start my own blog. This guy will never support me," I said. "No!" Kaplan replied.

"Don't do that. You're a writer, writing about what you care about. That's where I draw the line." It felt a little hollow. Peter didn't pay for my work, and I suspected that he hadn't been reading it enough to know how offensive my views might seem to the new owner.

My writing was becoming increasingly anti-Zionist. I visited Israel for the first time last summer, and in the West Bank, I met a South African who told me conditions were worse there than they had been under apartheid. When I got back, I posted a photograph of Arabs forced to worship outside the Damascus Gate to the Old City of Jerusalem because of heightened Israeli security, and a reader of my blog launched an "investigation" and called the photographer, evidently thinking I'd doctored the image.

I knew that Zionists were lobbying *The Observer*, writing to my editor and the new owner. Peter once said he got more e-mail about me than anything else in the paper. One of these e-mails, copied to me, said there was a "cancer on *The Observer*." That was mild. Others commented as "Phil Weiss" and purported to confess my bitterness over bad book reviews I'd gotten or said they had loved having sex with my Christian mother-in-law. One wrote that he wanted to "cut off your head and s--t down your neck."

One day Peter mentioned that the new owner had passed along one of these complaints and reminded him that the pro-Israel community was one he cared about. Peter said that he defended me, though he asked, "You're not a Holocaust denier, are you?" "Of course not," I said. "Good, I thought so."

I probably should have taken a more aggressive stance. I should have explained my belief that we were at a new point in Jewish history. When Jews left the ghettos of Europe during political emancipation in the 1800s, they underwent a "spiritual crisis" that

fostered messianic movements, as the Jewish historian Gershom Scholem has written, and today the Jewish advance into the American power structure was setting off similar crises. The Jewish community had defined Jewishness as attachment to Israel, and it was not coming to grips with the effect of that attachment on the Arab world or the United States.

My blog was frequently linked by Jewish websites and even newspapers. I can't say that I pleased them, but I had their respect. I was told that my traffic figures kept climbing as I stuck to my subject, though it was obvious that being at *The Observer* site helped me. At times I went too far, but then I didn't mind apologizing. "I'm too harsh on my people," I headlined a post regretting my tone on a Jewish-identity issue.

I had smart readers, whose comments were often better than my posts, and I felt more accountability to them than I had to my print readers. The flippancies and profanities I used to go in for began to vanish. The Internet is not the Wild West, it is more like a great ballroom. Yes, it permits disguise and anonymity, but it is, in the end, a social space in which one's words have consequences. I felt a sense of responsibility when I finished an item and had my finger poised over the enter key. I stopped posting pictures of my dogs.

As the anniversary of my blog approached, I decided I needed money to keep working. *The Observer* advertised alongside my posts, and Kushner was rapidly moving, as well he should have been, to retool the website for a modern audience. His plans were covered in the *New York Times*, but no one was calling me. I was the only daily contributor to the site then, but I wasn't on the agenda.

I told Peter I needed money. "How much?" he asked. I said \$25,000. He said he needed to check with his boss.

I got my appointment a week later. Closing the door, Peter said, "We're going to have a grown-up conversation." He told me that the owner believed in Israel, and so did he. Israel may do a lot of bad things, but it was still a force for good. I interrupted, "My wife said to me the other night, you can't expect a guy who doesn't believe in anything you're saying to give you \$25,000 a year to put it out." Peter nodded, "That's right."

But Peter felt committed to me as a writer. He didn't want to lose me from the paper and offered me a biweekly column. Kushner had "wincing" at the prospect, but Peter was the editor, and he wanted me in print. I could write about American politics, Obama and Hillary. I could go around the country during the campaign and have fun.

SECULAR JEWS ARE OFTEN INVESTED THEMSELVES IN A RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGY—A JEWISH NATIONALIST CLAIM ON THE HOLY LAND INSCRIBED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

Yes, but what about my hard-earned views? Israel and the Mideast were crucial pieces in American foreign policy. Jewish giving was the largest factor in Democratic campaign financing. Peter had never squelched my views, but how free would I be as a writer, knowing what I knew about the bosses' feelings?

As the meeting went on with Peter praising my talents in his Ziegfeldian way, I became upset. "Peter, don't you see what's happening in this country? Ron [Rosenbaum] just went to *Slate*. He is pro-Israel. *Slate* also lately hired Shmuel Rosner, an Israeli who loves the neocons, to write from Washington." I grabbed a galley of Jeffrey Goldberg's book from one of the piles in Peter's office. "Goldberg works for *The New Yorker* in Washington and because he thought America was dangerous for Jews, he moved to Israel and served in their army, then he moved back here and pushed America to

go to war in Iraq. Well, I'm different. I don't think America is dangerous for Jews, and I'm critical of Israel. And there's no room for me here. There's no room."

Peter clamped his lips. "What you've said is political. What I'm about to say to you is personal, as your friend: don't become a nut." I countered, "What if someone in the MIT linguistics department went up to Chomsky 40 years ago and said, 'Stick with linguistics, Noam. Don't become a nut.' That would have been bad advice." Peter said my talents were different from Chomsky's, they were literary. I shouldn't allow the political crank to crowd out the storyteller and humorist in me. He cited two writers who had become unhinged by politics in midlife: Morrie Ryskind had gone from writing Marx Brothers comedies to

being a John Birchler, and there was John Dos Passos, who became a zealous anti-communist in the 1930s.

I left stunned, but the conversation was clarifying. Peter and I both love Hitchcock films. In the best of them, there comes a dramatic psychological moment—"the reveal"—when a piece of information is disclosed that is key to the entire action. When Peter said, "We're going to have a grown-up conversation" and spoke openly of Israel, there could not have been a more genuine moment. I suppose I could have kept blogging on *The Observer* site, but I didn't want to lift a finger for people who saw me as a nut not worth spending money on. I looked on my shelves of books as a wasted enterprise.

A couple of weeks went by, and I began getting e-mail from readers who wondered where I was. One came from a guy at the *Forward*, Gabriel Sanders. I

told him I was setting my blog up on my own. "Why—may I ask?" he wrote back. I replied that *The Observer* had declined to pay me and that the paper "was uncomfortable with my politics."

Sanders promptly e-mailed Peter, who called me that night. He told me there was nothing censorious about our meeting. He wanted me to do a column. We had worked together for years; when had he ever expressed discomfort with my politics? He said I could keep doing the blog forever, and of course the column was my free realm.

It was clear to me that Peter was afraid of how the *Forward* story would look at a time when he was working out the separation of business and editorial concerns with a young boss. Tough. The one thing I'd gotten out of the deal was reputation—the *Forward* wasn't calling about my dogs' pictures—and now I was supposed to fall on my sword and negate the attention I was being given, even as *The Observer* got puffy coverage for its website? When Sanders called the next day, I told him that over many years of often provocative work, Kaplan had never censored me. But every signal I'd gotten about the blog had been less than supportive. I didn't mention the Holocaust denier bit.

All this happened a few weeks ago. I choose to write about it because my editor is not alone. Many Jews with strong feelings about Israel—many of whom, like Peter, have never been there—are helping to shape public perceptions. Almost all these opinion-makers are self-described secular Jews who get worked up about separating church and state when it's evangelical Christians trying to change laws on stem-cell research, abortion, and gay marriage. Yet these seculars are often invested themselves, without being aware of it, in a religious ideology—a Jewish nationalist claim on the Holy Land inscribed in the Old Testament.

Having witnessed this sort of blindness often in my career, I want to open the conversation. Several of my friends in the media went to Israel on youthful tours that gave them feelings of religious attachment to the country that they would never be open about in print. And if you read the memoirs of liberal writers Joseph Lelyveld, Daniel Schorr, and Max Frankel, it is evident that Zionism was an important part of their upbringing. Lately John Judis of *The New Republic* has joined my camp by writing bracingly that “dual loyalty ... is an inescapable part of being Jewish in a world in which a Jewish state exists.” It’s time these attitudes were openly discussed.

I’ve relaunched my blog on my own website. At *The Observer* site, I often felt that I was getting away with something, that it was more fitting for me to peddle my unconventional opinions from my own cart. And now that my blog is separated from a mainstream media address, I’ve noticed that the pro-Israel sirens, who care so much about influencing American leadership, don’t care so much about me.

Just in the last week, I’ve gone back to my shelf of books. I’ve been reading Steven B. Smith’s work on Leo Strauss and shaking my head at the idea that Jewish identity involves a “particular providence” that is at odds with Enlightenment ideals of citizenship.

Together with Peter, I’ve come up with an answer to the question I posed to *Newmark* a year back. I’ve gained a lot from my blog: knowledge of myself and the world, a feeling of service I’ve rarely had as a journalist. It is too much to ask the traditional media to provide such rewards, and yet they are so significant that it is only a matter of time before all serious journalists will also be bloggers. ■

Philip Weiss is at work on a book about Jewish issues. His blog is www.philipweiss.org/mondoweiss/.

Not Your Parents’ Protest Music

A new generation won’t “shut up and sing.”

By Michael Brendan Dougherty

AT THE JAN. 27 antiwar demonstration on the National Mall, aging boomers decked themselves in tie-dye and painted peace signs on their faces. Once again they were standing up against an unpopular president and an unpopular war. All that was needed to get the nostalgia up to maximum levels was some protest music, and the organizers obliged. From the dais, a young woman mustered her best let’s-get-this-party-started introduction: “You don’t have a protest until you hear from the Raging Grannies! Whoo!” A few old white women shuffled onto the stage, and without a backup band, without rhythm, and without mercy, began their aural assault. It consisted mostly of unfunny jokes about Bush set to the tune of “99 Bottles of Beer.” The wannabe hippies laughed politely—these were old ladies, after all—but most just waited for it to end.

The Vietnam-era got Creedence Clearwater Revival, the Beatles, and Woodstock. The ’60s swirled with socially conscious folk festivals and rock ’n’ roll rebellion. Young people cared enough about politics to shut down their campuses and riot at the ’68 Democratic Convention.

Nearly 40 years later, there is a new war to oppose. But where is the soundtrack for today’s opposition? “For years,” wrote *Slate* contributor Jody Rosen, “critics have complained about American pop music’s indifference to

politics. In the 1990s, apathy seemed pervasive: Grunge rockers turned protest music inward, lashing out at those domestic oppressors, Mom and Dad; hip-hop’s erstwhile black nationalist firebrands started rapping about their jewelry.” Is the current generation just failing to live up to their parent’s legacy? Were the boomers true idealists? Is Generation X entirely self-absorbed and materialistic?

Robert Christgau, the rock critic who wrote for the *Village Voice* for over 30 years, isn’t persuaded. He has some unfortunate news for summer-of-love nostalgists: “I don’t think there was a lot of protest music in the ’60s and we have plenty now.” Christgau even argues that if you look for it, modern protest music is far superior and much more pointed than almost anything in the ’60s. Bob Dylan’s “Masters of War” is a general song,” the dean of rock critics notes. “‘Blowin’ in the Wind’ is pretty ambiguous.” But Neil Young, given a new lease by college stations across the country, is quite specific in his goals. In a swirling sing-along, “Let’s Impeach the President” Young cries, “Let’s impeach the president for lying / And leading our country into war / Abusing all the power that we gave him / And shipping all our money out the door.”

And protest music isn’t just for aging rockers looking to be relevant again. The multi-platinum pop artist Pink has

released “Dear Mr. President,” a plaintive song that takes direct shots at Bush, not only for the war, but also his opposition to gay marriage. On hip-hop stations, Jay-Z bashes Bush and the media for their treatment of the victims of Hurricane Katrina. The gangsta rapper wonders how “The same idiots that can’t get water into a major American city in less than three days are trying to win a war.” “There was nothing like this [in the ’60s],” Christgau says.

This isn’t to say that ’60s music didn’t influence its listeners. In his 2003 book, *How the Left Lost Teen Spirit*, Danny Goldberg explains the power music held over his mind: “The carefully detailed political position papers that radical groups labored over so strenuously paled in comparison to the visceral power of songs that made manifest shared political beliefs, songs like Dylan’s ‘Only a Pawn in Their Game,’ about the murder of civil rights leader Medgar Evers, and Buffalo Springfield’s ‘For What It’s Worth,’ which described the ominous police presence at a protest march in Hollywood.” Protest music makes protest attractive. After all, most people aren’t converted to a new faith by reading its theologians; they are attracted to the hymns, the rites, and the miracles.

But Goldberg, a longtime music executive, doesn’t hold any illusions either: “The mythology about the ’60s is not completely accurate. ... That’s something antiwar hippies and boomers need to acknowledge.” As many pundits remind us, the parallels between Vietnam and Iraq are many—intractable conflicts led by unpopular presidents, shifting rationales for war, administrations scrambling for political cover while soldiers were dying. Goldberg thinks the differences are also important in explaining youth attitudes and protest music. In Vietnam, he says, “You had nearly 20 times the amount of

deaths, there was also a draft ... so the number of young people affected both literally and potentially was so much larger.”

Despite these crucial differences, Goldberg says, “I’m very impressed with what’s happened in the past four years. ... This generation of artists has been more vocal at an earlier time.” He points to Green Day as exemplars of the phenomenon. The pop-punk band’s 2004 platinum album “American Idiot” took the form of a rock opera, and while the words “Iraq” and “Bush” make no appearance in the lyric sheets or liner notes, the album is clearly the artists’ take on post-9/11 America. In the boot-stomping single “Holiday,” singer Billy Joe Armstrong parodies what he thinks he is hearing out of Congress: “Sieg Heil to the president Gasman / Bombs away is your punishment / Pulverize the Eiffel towers / Who criticize your government ... and kill all the fags that don’t agree.” Although that part of the song was often edited out for mainstream radio, Green Day still got its message out. In the video

Organized by Fat Mike (Michael Burkett) of the band NOFX, it took its cues from the Rock Against Reagan campaign of the early 1980s. Fat Mike organized live concerts and encouraged punk music fans to register to vote at punkvoter.com.

People expect punk rockers to oppose the establishment—especially one claiming to be conservative. But it might surprise that some of the best and most explicit protest music comes from country and roots rock musicians. Christgau calls Todd Snider’s “You Got Away With It” “the most blistering anti-Bush song out there.” The song casts Bush as a reckless youth beating up hippies. Steve Earle has also put his progressive politics into his music: in a moving song entitled “Home to Houston,” he follows a truck driver who looks for good money driving in a convoy in Basra.

In 2006, James McMurtry, son of novelist Larry McMurtry, won American Music Awards for Song and Album of the Year with his protest music. The roots-rock singer-songwriter penned the

IT MIGHT SURPRISE THAT SOME OF THE BEST AND MOST EXPLICIT PROTEST MUSIC COMES FROM COUNTRY AND ROOTS ROCK MUSICIANS.

for “Wake Me Up When September Ends,” a young couple promises never to leave each other, but as the song progresses, the girl confronts her boyfriend, asking, “How can you do this to me?” The next scenes reveal that he has enlisted in the Marine Corps and is being sent to war. The girlfriend cries as scenes of war play out to the end of the song. The album sold over six million copies and netted the group several Grammys.

Punk rockers, known for putting politics in their music, came together in 2004 for “Rock Against Bush” a two-CD set of songs lambasting the president.

working-class antiwar anthem “We Can’t Make It Here Anymore.” Its lyrics are covered in rust, sweat, and blood and evoke images of closed factories and working men reduced to stocking shirts at WalMart “just like the ones we made before / ‘Cept this one came from Singapore.” Meanwhile, the rich men who sent their jobs away will “never know need... / Their kids won’t bleed in the damn little war.” Bernie Sanders, the progressive Vermont senator, chose “We Can’t Make It Here Anymore” as a campaign song in 2006. Merle Haggard expressed similar sentiments in his 2005 single, “America First.” The 70-year-old

country-music legend sang, "Freedom is stuck in reverse / Let's get out of Iraq and get back on the track / And let's rebuild America first."

Strangely, the musical act most identified with protest is the Dixie Chicks, whose identity was transformed by the war. While introducing an innocuous song about a soldier, lead singer Natalie Maines told a British audience, "Just so you know, we're on the good side with y'all. We do not want this war, this violence, and we're ashamed that the president of the United States is from Texas." The group didn't have a political song in its catalog at the time. Nevertheless, in the days of war fever, country-radio stations banned the traitorous Chicks. Morning news programs had particular fun broadcasting red-staters steamrolling collections of Chicks' paraphernalia. In the end, the group marketed their comeback album to blue-staters and were rewarded with a Grammy. The new songs weren't even all that political but instead drew thematically from the ordeal the group faced in the press and with their fans.

One reason punk and country have been the primary genres in protest music is their styles' capacity to convey conviction and sincerity. For pop musicians wanting to express dissent in their music, there is an immovable obstacle in their audience: an attitude of ironic detachment. As Jody Rosen noted, popular music in the '90s had no political mission. And to the disappointment of many boomer rock critics, pop music didn't want an agenda. The piano-driven trio Ben Folds Five celebrated and criticized this indifference memorably in their song "Battle of Who Could Care Less." Set to harmonized minor-key doo-dooing, the life of a common slacker—watching "Rockford Files" reruns and calling a friend for some pot—sounded glorious in its mid-tempo monotony. That the song was meant to

be emblematic of the era was obvious from the lyrics: "I've got this great idea," Folds sang, "fine pewter portraits of General Apathy and Major Boredom singing 'Whatever and Ever, Amen.'" It's the ultimate Sept. 10 mentality.

Christgau thinks this disengagement from politics, from any sort of conviction at all, derives from "a sense of impotence or fatalism. ... [The youth have] an understandable skepticism that the engines of government and economy can be derailed."

A little cynicism may be justified. Commercialism has been gobbling up the substance of distortion-pedal-driven protest music. John Lennon's song "Revolution" was flipped on its head when Michael Jackson sold the rights to the song to Nike in the '80s. Fogerty's classic "Fortunate Son" was scrubbed of its political lyrics when it was used to sell Wrangler Jeans. Lenny Kravitz, who, for a decade, self-consciously modeled his look and sound on '60s psychedelia, covered The Guess Who's blistering antiwar song, "American Woman." This was the song Pat Nixon expressly asked that the originators not play when they visited the White House. But in the late '90s the references to "war machines" weren't an attack on U.S. missions in the Balkans; the antiwar metaphor had been chucked for the most literal interpretation possible. The music video featured Heather Graham writhing seductively on a white bus. This was the "conquest of cool" that Thomas Frank talked about in his journal *The Baffler*. Everything in youth culture can be stripped of its political content, stamped with a corporate label and a price tag, and sold back.

Increasingly, successful artists are articulating this enervation and, in so doing, combating it. In his recent top-20 hit "Waiting on the World to Change," John Mayer sings, "They say we stand for nothing and / there's no way we ever could / now we see everything that's

going wrong / with the world and those who lead it / we just feel like we don't have the means / to rise above and beat it." Christgau says of Mayer's song that it "expresses concisely this fatalism in a completely sympathetic and even courageous way." Over a relaxed groove, the chorus repeats, "We keep waiting, waiting for the world to change." Mayer lets listeners fill in the obvious rejoinder: let's stop waiting and do something.

With so much more artistic dissent against the Bush administration and the war in Iraq, why does it seem to add up to less of a movement than its Vietnam-era counterpart? Goldberg says that it's because this kind of music was new in the '60s, and so much more was happening in proximity to the antiwar movement. "You had the civil-rights movement, most importantly, but also the beginning of the feminist movement, the judicial decisions removing limitations on speech, and all this was wrapped around the largest generation in American history," he says. For Goldberg, the '60s counterculture and antiwar movement also had a unifying figure: "There is no John Lennon today. He was the most famous face of the most famous band ever... and fearless about being political. ... It would be like the five biggest stars of 'American Idol' did an antiwar record."

While today's protest music may never find an avatar like Lennon, the songs are still shaping the attitudes and prejudices of millions of listeners. Blasting Green Day through the white earbuds of an iPod may not match the experience of going to Woodstock, but they weren't registering voters at Woodstock, as Fat Mike did in 2004. The variety and quality of the music, from the progressive-minded rockers to the middle American nationalism of roots-rock auger well, not just for our future politics, but for our stereos as well. ■

The Giuliani-Driven Christians

Prioritizing foreign policy over cultural concerns, evangelicals testify for America's liberal mayor.

By Paul Gottfried

SUPPORT FOR FORMER New York City mayor Rudolph Giuliani among the Religious Right and particularly among evangelicals is a surprising development in American political culture. According to Quinnipiac polls, Giuliani is the Republican presidential candidate who enjoys the most popularity among evangelical Protestants, and the lead in polls that he commands in certain swing states, especially Florida, is attributed to "white Evangelical voters." On April 30, the *Baptist Standard* announced that "Giuliani leads among Evangelicals; Clinton leads among Catholics." Although the report about Clinton's support may have been news, the information about Giuliani was, by the end of April, old hat. Already in February the *Washington Post* had him "surging among white Evangelicals."

At the beginning of May, among this group, which is essential for large Republican turnouts on election day, Giuliani ran 11 points ahead of his closest competitor, Sen. John McCain, whose positions on abortion and other social issues would suggest closer agreement with evangelical values. For a while it seemed that Giuliani's social positions—which are generally garden-variety leftist on abortion, gay marriage, and amnesty for illegal immigrants—plus his publicized dalliances, two failed marriages, and the attacks on his lack of paternal sense of responsibility made by his son would end the Religious Right's love affair with the candidate. But this has not been the case.

A number of Giuliani's fans in the Fourth Estate, such as Cal Thomas,

Richard Brookhiser, and the editorial writers for the neoconservative *New York Post*, have revealed some of the reasons for the Religious Right's attachment. Religious Protestants have come to view the issues that Giuliani has emphasized, "national security" and "fighting terror," as more crucial than those family issues they stressed in the past. Thomas, who is himself a professing Christian but with a neoconservative, Zionist twist, stated the opinion on March 13 that such prioritizing indicates a definite "maturing" among his coreligionists. This seems to be the general view of the establishment conservative press in the U.S., which remains agog over Giuliani's candidacy and his stand on terrorism.

The problem is that nothing in Giuliani's past, except for rhetorical posturing, would suggest that he is especially equipped to deal with international terrorists. Although violent crime in New York City declined under his administration, the same general trend could be observed in other American cities, and that trend might be related to demographic factors and to the building and use of prisons as much as to Giuliani's vaunted toughness. And there is not necessarily a connection between getting criminals and derelicts off the streets in the Big Apple and apprehending international terrorists. The two would seem to involve different skills.

Additionally, Rudy's recent assurance to evangelicals that as president he would nominate "strict-constructionist judges to the federal courts" tells more

about the credulity of his audience than Giuliani's likely course as chief executive. While mayor, his appointments to New York's lower courts came consistently from the left wing of the Democratic Party. These appointees reflected the mayor's pro-choice positions rather than the "strict constructionist" perspective that is now associated with critics of abortion.

As for Giuliani's spirited presence in New York City during the crisis of 9/11, clearly that disaster was a veritable windfall for him. It allowed the mayor to regain his plummeting popularity by posing against dramatic backdrops and giving pep talks to firefighters. Since then, the media coverage of his comings and goings has been overwhelmingly favorable, and contrary to what is dutifully reported by FOX News, Giuliani is made to appear far more appetizing on network news than Republican *bête noire* Hillary Clinton.

When a Republican friend announced that the Democratic media have already arranged for Hillary's coronation, my wife's annoyed response was "that's all nonsense. They hate Hillary. It's Rudy they love." I would have to agree. On television, Hillary is made to look inept and shrewish. Rudy, by contrast, comes across as bold, decisive, and virile. And this may have to do with how the candidates are presented at least as much as with what they say. Whatever sexual and family baggage is attached to Rudy is not something that the media has recently chosen to highlight. One exasperated right-of-center columnist, Cliff

Kincaid, has complained, “Fox news has already crowned Giuliani” even before the primaries have begun.

And the Religious Right is leading the parade. To some extent it reflects the views of the American conservative media, which is almost without exception dominated by neoconservative spokespersons. Giuliani is well-liked in this group because of his strong identification with the Israeli hard right and because he tried to throw Yassir Arafat, then head of the PLO, out of New York City. He has also zealously endorsed the war in Iraq, an undertaking in which the neoconservatives have a deep and obvious investment. Last year in *The Weekly Standard*, Bill Kristol called for a presidential ticket consisting of Giuliani and Joe Lieberman, praising both for their commitment to the struggle to bring democracy to the Middle East. Although Kristol for the moment backs McCain, perhaps for leverage, one cannot doubt that he and his staff would be delighted if Giuliani became president.

Since the younger generation of neo-conservatives tends to be either on the Left on social issues or totally indifferent to them, and, like Giuliani, makes no secret of welcoming illegal immigrants into the country, Giuliani’s domestic stands pose no problem for them. The Religious Right is going with the conservative media flow by rallying around Giuliani, playing its long-established role as supplier of Republican foot soldiers and movement-conservative groupies.

But it must be stressed that the issue that has come to trump all other evangelical concerns is fighting the war on terror. Cal Thomas has extolled his fellow evangelicals to recognize the big picture: “Character is seen as less important than who can face the multiple challenges facing the nation”—specifically, the struggle against international terror. From the evangelical perspective, this confrontation with terror is so intertwined with

other issues that it serves as a kind of shorthand. Israel, Zionism, and the glorification of American democracy as a world model are all at least implicit in the evangelical conception of the struggle against terror—one that Giuliani is imagined to be able to lead better than any other presidential contender. During a visit to New York by a Saudi Arabian prince soon after 9/11, Giuliani took the occasion to speak out against the visitor’s attempt to link the lack of goodwill for the U.S. among Arabs to American indifference to the Palestinian cause. His tirade was directed against those who suggest “moral equivalency between liberal democracies, like Israel and the United States” and their current enemies. This broadside has continued to come up on evangelical websites pushing Giuliani’s candidacy.

Another related factor here, which the *New York Times* underscored in an April 30 feature story, is that evangelicals have moved away from divisive issues like abortion to stress an apparently less controversial “human rights” agenda. The movement’s leaders have worked overtime to sway the White House to pursue democratization worldwide, and publications like *Christian Century* have moved away from the Moral Majority kind of politics characteristic of evangelicals in the past to affirming the need for exporting American political practices. Significantly, the “Letter of Support for Democracy” that was sent to President Bush on Feb. 25, 2003, calling for regime change in Iraq, was signed by World Evangelical Alliance dignitaries as well as prominent neoconservatives. This exhortation was fully consistent with the stated political views of the National Alliance of Evangelicals and the World Alliance of Evangelicals. Despite the erosion of support among evangelicals for the Iraq War from its onetime high of almost 80 percent, it is, according to polls, still well over 50 percent.

Unlike the more Biblically literalist and apocalyptic fundamentalists, with whom they are regularly confused in the media, evangelicals are usually upwardly mobile professionals, and for at least a decade, they have begun to split on family and environmental issues. On abortion and gay rights, evangelicals, who now number in the tens of millions, are hardly as united as they once were. But they do continue to show loyalty to the idea of the U.S. as a special kind of political entity that is meant to enlighten other, still benighted societies. Critical scholars such as Richard Gamble, James Kurth, and George Marsden have examined the progress of American cultural Protestantism and particularly the substitution of certain patriotic themes for older religious teachings. Gamble and Kurth in particular have accentuated the way in which “American democracy” has become an object of American Protestant adoration. It is essential, however, not to confuse such adulation and the foreign policy it favors with traditional religious enthusiasm.

Contrary to our obsessively secularist press, evangelicals are not trying to unleash an apocalypse by promoting American military adventures. It would also be an exaggeration to claim that evangelicals are pushing the war on terror because it is being waged against infidel Muslims. The Bush administration has done everything humanly possible to depict the present conflict as one featuring “democratic” Muslims aided by “democratic” America standing against “undemocratic” extremists.

Evangelicals believe in exactly the kind of war that the Bush administration has described in its idealistic moments. It is also the one that Giuliani, as the protector of our “security” and the denier of “moral equivalency,” represents more than any other presidential candidate. Bush’s favorite speechwriter, Michael J.

Gerson, who crafted both his sweeping Second Inaugural and his 2002 State of the Union Address delivered just before the Iraq War began, is a self-proclaimed evangelical. It was Gerson who, as the *Washington Post* explained on the occasion of his June 2006 departure, “was the formulator of the Bush doctrine making the spread of democracy the fundamental goal of American foreign policy”—a goal he stressed in every foreign-policy speech that he drafted for Bush. It was not the neoconservatives who scripted these globalist revolutionary hallucinations but a born-again Christian.

This should give pause to those who identify with the small-government, mind-your-own-business Right. It is not just neoconservatives but their evangelical allies who are the foreign-policy activists. They have taken this stand because of their ardent democratist and pro-Israeli sentiments and not because they are fixated on a particular view of the apocalypse.

Now that powerful segment of the American electorate has concluded that this social liberal from New York will continue a missionizing venture that they understand as an extension of Wilson’s “war to end all wars” and “make the world safe for democracy.” Giuliani’s evangelical supporters do not view him in the same way the liberal media does—that is, as a social liberal who will push his party leftward. Given the erosion of the evangelical consensus on once hard-core moral issues, a tendency that religious sociologist Mark Shibley has studied in depth, Giuliani’s stands on abortion or gay marriage may matter less and less to many evangelical voters. Like Mike Gerson, these Republicans are focused on foreign-policy goals—and they seem to have found their candidate in the maritally challenged former mayor. ■

Paul Gottfried is a professor of the humanities at Elizabethtown College.

Divide & Rule

The Republican insiders’ guide to ethnic manipulation.

By James P. Pinkerton

HIDDEN AWAY, secreted in the dusty stacks of the Machiavellian Library, is the definitive how-to guide, *Winning Through Ethnic Manipulation*. Observing the immigration and affirmative-action policies favored by the current administration, it’s one book that I am sure George W. Bush—or at least Karl Rove—has read.

Start with the chapter entitled “Divide and Conquer,” which instructs power-practitioners to dream up racial hierarchies aimed at keeping potentially powerful groups divided—too busy fighting over crumbs on the floor to notice those enjoying the lavish feast at the big table. An example is found in the history of the New World, where white slaveowners pitted light-skinned blacks against dark-skinned blacks. The house slave vs. field slave distinction, cruelly internalized by African Americans themselves, has ever since hobbled black political power. Score one for white Machiavels.

In other places, the racial Machiavellians found themselves in such a minority that they had to import new ethnicities to help control the restive majority. That was the situation in South Africa, where the British brought in Indians to bolster their own power. One cog in the imperial machine was Mohandas Gandhi. The young barrister, arriving in 1893, was eager to begin work as a colonizing functionary. Yet the Hindu, mistreated by white racists in his new land, soon began to think less than favorably about British rule over India. He evinced no sympathy for Africans, however, telling

an audience of Indians in 1896, “Ours is one continual struggle against a degradation sought to be inflicted upon us by the Europeans, who desire to degrade us to the level of the raw Kaffir.” Demonstrating the racist disdain of a brown for a black, Gandhi characterized the Kaffir as one “whose sole ambition is to collect a certain number of cattle to buy a wife with and, then, pass his life in indolence and nakedness.” To be fair, Gandhi’s views changed as he grew older—and after he left South Africa to return home.

So back to Bush and his crew. American blacks don’t vote Republican? The “Divide and Conquer” chapter provides a solution: bring in 10 or 20 million Hispanics and suddenly blacks are no longer the biggest racial minority. When those Hispanics arrive, praise their “strong family values” and get as many as possible into jobs that displace blacks. (As a side benefit, get those macho men into the military because Uncle Sam needs more *forraje de canon*—for wars such as Iraq—than native-stock mothers are willing to offer up.) Bush & Co. can hope that the *Nuevos Americanos* become Republicans—surely these proud working folk will shun Democrats as the party of lower-down blacks.

Which leads us to the next chapter, “Overwhelm and Defeat,” detailing techniques for routing one’s enemies by manipulating the immigration spigot. The 2002 movie “Gangs of New York,” set in the mid-19th century, ably recaptures the ethnic dynamics of that

particular time and place. An American Protestant, played by Daniel Day-Lewis, watches the “harps” clambering down the gangplank from Ireland; he derides the immigrants for their willingness to “do a job for a nickel what a n-----r does for a dime and a white man used to get a quarter for.”

Of course, readers of *Winning Through Ethnic Manipulation* have all learned that one must deny that wages can be adversely affected by competition. So even a self-proclaimed free marketeer such as Bush must swear that the market does not, in fact, work—that there’s no income impact from immigration. The newcomers, the president stoutly insists, are merely “doing the jobs Americans won’t do.” It is therefore Bush’s immovable position that incentives don’t work, that wages couldn’t possibly rise high enough to persuade Americans to do grunt work—or, alternatively, to persuade employers to automate more.

César Chávez, not commonly thought of as a free-market fan, knew better 40 years ago: new workers undermine the wages of existing workers. That’s why Chávez, trying to build his United Farm Workers union, stood opposed to strike-breaking immigration. Yet Chávez’s stubborn awareness of the law of supply and demand was eventually crushed by the Left’s infatuation with multiculturalism.

So with the leadership of the Republican and Democratic Parties united on the issue of open borders—or at least guest workers—it’s been left to a few brave souls on the Left to recall Chávez’s plaintive appeal: you can’t have anything close to labor solidarity, or income solidity, if the border is kept open. Harold Meyerson, writing last year in *LA Weekly*, observed that Southern California firms engaging in “construction, building maintenance, and trucking” have an easy economic strategy, made possible by abundant labor: “Fire their workers

and hire immigrants for a fraction of what they’d paid their previous employees.” Interestingly, Meyerson didn’t include agribusiness in his litany of salary-slashing employers. Why? Because the substitute-foreign-workers-for-domestic-workers phenomenon has spread far beyond the farm. There are plenty of “good jobs at good wages” in construction, building maintenance, and trucking—or at least there were.

One might wonder: how could native-born blacks and native-born Hispanics agree to support a loose immigration policy that so adversely affects them? To answer that question, we must turn to the next chapter in the book, “Play Favorites.” The newfangled term for calculated discrimination is, of course, “affirmative action.” That is, pluck a few winners from the ranks of the lower orders so as to have a few non-white faces agreeing docilely with the elite on core concerns.

It’s a time-tested approach. Empires have long sought to co-opt discontented minorities by singling leaders out and privileging them, even over the majority. For example, as the Hapsburg monarchy found itself losing dominion over a fractionally polyglot central European empire, the government in Vienna desperately tried to grease the squeakiest wheels to keep the whole contraption together. The biggest squeaks came from the Hungarians, hence it became the Austro-Hungarian Empire after 1867, although true power still resided in Vienna. But in the feverishly nationalistic decades that followed, the Hapsburgs had no choice but to dispense still more grease to still more squeakers. And so, paradoxical as it might sound, the least-favored group in the Hapsburg realm ended up being the ordinary German-speaking subjects—the Hapsburg base, one might call them.

The Viennese elite knew they had their own *Mitbürger* in their pocket;

after all, where were those put-upon Germans going to go? So royal solicitude was directed at the myriad of other ethnic groups—Croatian, Serbian, Ukrainian, and on and on—all of whom hated the empire they lived in. It was a formula requiring vast cynicism and corruption, and ultimately it collapsed. But the Machiavellian book bought the Hapsburgs a few more decades in power.

Who gets the grease in America? It was an easy call for the neo-Hapsburgs in Washington to look past the white majority and heap co-opting offerings on targeted minorities. It was “social justice” for former slaves, but the basic injustice became apparent when affirmative action was extended to groups—from Portuguese-Americans to Orthodox Jews—who had suffered no particular oppression in the United States. Indeed, as the ethnic-preference system grew ever more baroque, even the original intended prime beneficiaries, the descendants of American slaves, found themselves increasingly pushed away from the pork barrel. In 2004, the *New York Times* got around to noticing that a majority of Harvard’s “African American” students were not native-stock black Americans at all but West Indian and African immigrants or their children.

Needless to say, the emerging black elite, with its roots overseas, has vigorously defended this mutated status quo, shushing ordinary blacks who get nothing out of the spoils system. That’s fine with the white elite, as long as there are no riots.

Bush is practicing a similar strategy with his pet minority, Hispanics. Exhibit A is Alberto Gonzales. Does anybody think that Gonzales would have ever landed a job at Main Justice, to say nothing of the attorney general’s office, were it not for his presidential *patrón*? Without Bush, Gonzales would be a public defender somewhere—and he must

know it. So it's little wonder that he is so willing to tout immigration and guest-worker policies designed to bring new Mexicans across the Rio Grande, even though they impoverish Mexican-Americans.

But wait a second. Isn't it a little politically incorrect to use the term "Mexican-Americans"? Yes, indeed. According to the evolving precepts of PC, percolating out of the academy and the bureaucracy in the '70s, those who hail from Cuba or Puerto Rico or Mexico—and two dozen more countries—are now all "Hispanic" or, to use a trendier term, "Latino." Maybe somebody at the Ford Foundation, the limousine-liberal outfit that financed so many professional Hispanic activists, was poring over the big book, too—especially the chapter entitled "Unite to Win It All Back."

The ethno-*Anschluss* plan worked. Suddenly 45 million Spanish-speaking Americans aren't to be divided up into feisty little clans, each with a separate flag and tradition, but rather to be treated as one unified ethnic monolith. Moreover, those 45 million are increasingly to be seen as indivisible from the 500 million Hispanics who live south of the Mexifornia border.

It's now not just the president of Mexico who speaks of a *reconquista*; it's the entire population of Latin America. Maybe somebody south of the border has been reading *Victoria Con La Manipulación Étnica*. Poor Bush and Rove: they think they are the only ones reading the big book of ethnic manipulating and muscling. This White House thinks of itself as a citadel of political genius—because some talking-pointer dreamt up new ways to sneak amnesty provisions into the 2007 immigration bill while simultaneously pitching it to suspicious conservatives.

Specifically, Bush and Rove figure that if they can get the basic outlines of guest-worker and legalization proce-

dures into law, they won't have to worry about its absurd and unenforceable provisions. The courts, entropy—and the magnanimity of some future *jefe*—will surely erode the provisions that might require, for example, illegals to "touch back" to their home countries before gaining citizenship. This provision, complete with an escalating schedule of fines and penalties, is central to the White House strategy for getting "comprehensive immigration reform" through Congress. And if it has no chance of ever being enforced? Well, nothing in the Machiavellian Library instructs the reader to tell the truth.

But what if Robert Rector of the Heritage Foundation is right when he estimates that the Bush plan could lead to another 100 million people streaming into

the U.S.? Would the power-balance start to change if America was 30 or 40 or 50 percent Hispanic? Would the English-speaking readers of the big book, proud of their "strategy," find themselves out-strategered by others who read the same book in Spanish?

Winning Through Ethnic Manipulation is a powerful tool. But while it guarantees cynical illumination to its readers, it does not guarantee triumph. The Hapsburgs, as we have seen, used the book, and yet they still failed. And they were a lot smarter than these Machiavellis from Mayberry who are dipping into it now. ■

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Law Breaking

Untethered from tradition, ancient code becomes modern whim.

By Gerald J. Russello

WHAT IS A GOOD secular liberal to do when unliberal behavior challenges liberal legal principles? As a recent court decision in Germany shows, liberalism loses.

A German court recently ruled that a Muslim woman could not obtain a speedy divorce on the grounds that her husband had abused her. The court ruled that because the couple is of Moroccan descent, and because supposedly "it is not unusual that the husband uses physical punishment against the wife" in that culture, such abuse was not proper grounds for a divorce under German law. That the wife had been born in Germany and the husband

already had a restraining order against him for previous abuse were of no consequence.

The decision caused a predictable uproar, and the judge was removed from further participation in the case. She did not go quietly but issued a statement defending her ruling, suggesting that the husband could argue that his "honor was compromised" because his wife had adopted a more Western lifestyle and therefore, presumably, his abuse could be explained. The *New York Times* weighed in, assuring its readers that such abuse was not sanctioned by "mainstream Muslims" or the Koran, despite what the judge implied in her opinion.

Indeed, shortly thereafter, the *Times* profiled a female Islamic scholar whose work centered on new translations of the very verses that some believe give warrant for such abuse. But the report on the case ultimately sounded an ambiguous tone. It noted that there have been a string of honor killings of Muslim women in Germany and that many women in similar cultural circumstances already fear going to court to protect themselves. In other words, it is unclear just how numerous or influential those “mainstream Muslims” are.

This ruling is just the most recent in a series of confrontations between European elites and the limitations of their worldview when confronted by a sincerely religious minority. As with other controversies, such as the recent French law concerning wearing headscarves and other religious clothing in school and the temporary decision, on security and other grounds, to cancel a Mozart opera in Berlin because of its depiction of the head of Muhammad, the judge’s ruling tells us more about the death rattle of liberalism than the underlying disputes about Koranic injunctions or cultural traditions. These controversies illustrate that liberalism’s proponents increasingly face the conclusion that it cannot fully explain or defend its premises outside its own cultural context, particularly that of the heritage of Christianity.

For a generation, liberal judges have been trained to treat all cultural practices as equal and are becoming more hard-pressed to defend the very law that gives them the authority to adjudicate disputes. In America, we have seen this (so far) to a lesser degree. The recent controversy over the Supreme Court’s invocation of international law in *Roper v. Simmons* to strike down a death-penalty statute and in the military-detainee *Hamdan* decision, however, give the flavor of what is to come. If no

law or tradition is better than any other, and any source can be invoked to justify a judge’s own preference, why defer to the Congress or stick to the language of the Constitution?

The German judge faced a dilemma: multicultural tolerance required that German law not intrude upon cultural practices that it in other circumstances would forbid, yet permitting them offends the liberal principle of equality. That conflict arises from the nature of contemporary liberalism itself because its main premises are simply infeasible in practice.

Since the 1970s, liberalism has been in a death spiral because it cannot reconcile its incompatible assumptions. First, there is an obsession with material equality in which a forced distribution of wealth and income, based on a notion of people separate from any shared heritage or tradition, is considered a prerequisite for a just society. Making that equality happen requires a huge government bureaucracy and state intervention.

The second premise contradicts the first: extreme tolerance that requires everyone and every culture to be treated identically, without casting “judgment” or placing restraints on conduct. Combined, these premises have led to the full flowering of a society in which some rights, like abortion or the right to produce pornography, become absolute claims upon society, while support for traditional rights, like private property or standards of community decency, are ridiculed as violations of equality.

The final premise is the rejection of religious or other views from public discourse unless they accord with liberalism. Religious reasons, in other words, cannot be a permissible justification for action, and liberal scholars have spent many agonized words over the supremely condescending question of how to allow religious people into public life while leaving their faith behind.

These premises render a true republican, federalist political culture impossible. Instead, liberal principles encourage the emergence of a behemoth state and its attendant bureaucracies in order to safeguard favored rights, engage in income distribution, and destroy lesser authorities such as states, churches, or voluntary organizations that stand in the way of the total state.

But the problem is more basic. Liberalism really is simply a reaction against the main streams of Western thought and not an independent tradition capable of sustaining itself. In Germany, for example, while non-Western cultural circumstances can prevent a woman from obtaining a quick divorce when in physical danger, Christians have been forbidden by law from homeschooling their children, and rules of dress are being used to compel nuns to cease wearing their traditional habits. Elsewhere in the West, the trend has been similar. In England, Catholic social services agencies are being forced to place children with same-sex parents. In Quebec, the government has proposed forbidding private Christian schools from teaching Biblical ethics.

America is only a little behind. Courts have upheld laws in both California and New York requiring Catholic hospitals to include contraceptive coverage as part of their insurance programs, despite evidence that the laws were specifically directed at Catholic institutions and their resistance to contraception. Others have already argued for the application of nondiscrimination statutes against churches or other institutions that supposedly practice discrimination between genders.

These incidents debunk the supposed neutrality of liberal theory. In fact, liberalism has never outgrown its initial appearance as a rejection of the political history of the West and its religious origins and has thus always been directed

at Christian teachings and practices. Accordingly, a liberal multicultural society becomes incapable of making distinctions or judgments, even those that would increase liberal goals of tolerance and equality.

Conservatives would be wrong, however, to conclude that the flaw is the passage of particular laws and not the principle of a secularized state imposing them. The examples given above should not inspire the confidence of conservatives that government could be used solely for good ends if only it were in the right hands. (This is the perennial category mistake Republicans make when they seek political influence: they always think that their folks will use power the “right” way and are almost always disappointed.) Conservatives traditionally have feared state power—and rightfully so. Hence the conservative embrace of federalism and various forms of decentralization and localism so that multiple authorities, cultural practices, and traditions can serve as bulwarks of individual liberty and true cultural development. To argue otherwise would give the game away and permit liberalism to further erode structures still beyond the reach of government power. Conservatives should therefore to some degree be respectful of those wishing to follow their own traditions within a state that seeks to crush all intervening social, religious, or cultural traditions. The problem, however, is not necessarily (or not only) with those traditions but rather the inability of a liberal state to understand or address them.

What is needed is to replace liberal multiculturalism with a more realistic view of religion and the roots of culture. In his controversial speech last year at the University of Regensburg in Germany, Pope Benedict XVI set out a position quite at odds with secular liberalism. He said,

In the Western world it is widely held that only positivistic reason and the forms of philosophy based on it are universally valid. Yet the world’s profoundly religious cultures see this exclusion of the divine from the universality of reason as an attack on their most profound convictions. A reason which is deaf to the divine and which relegates religion into the realm of subcultures is incapable of entering into the dialogue of cultures.

This describes liberalism in a nutshell. It cannot effectively deal with religious belief, and its reliance on a false rationalism prevents an alliance with religious believers in creating a stronger and more lasting culture. Moreover, its devotion to multicultural tolerance prevents it from making a judgment in the face of cultural practices that conflict with the secular law.

The British historian Christopher Dawson diagnosed this problem decades ago in his magisterial 1920 book, *Progress and Religion*. While appreciative of some of the benefits liberalism has provided the modern world, Dawson perceived a fatal weakness in the liberal order that threatened not only the protections accorded religious belief but indeed that order’s very existence. Because it had dispensed with its religious basis, secular liberalism was vulnerable to appeals to economic utility or political power or the seeming objectivity of science. Dawson concluded that the understanding of liberalism reflected in these systems was doomed to failure: “Reason, which had entered so triumphantly on its career of explaining nature and man to itself by its own unaided power, ended in a kind of rational suicide by explaining itself away.” The German judge’s decision could not more perfectly fulfill Dawson’s prediction.

The paths suggested by Pope Benedict and Dawson may take numerous forms, but all of them would have to engage Europe’s Christian heritage. One need not look further than Germany’s own neighbor—the closest and most recent example of a truly multicultural state in Europe is the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Although the idea of empire has a bad reputation in some quarters, and rightfully so, in comparison to the ethnic cleansing and civil warfare that has characterized its former possessions in the Balkans, or to the Belgian colonial disaster in the Congo (not to mention Iraq), the Hapsburgs managed their polyglot empire reasonably well, without surrendering its own identity as a state with a definable cultural and religious tradition. The Austrian Jewish writer Joseph Roth, for example, wrote favorably about the empire and its treatment of its innumerable minority groups. (Freud once said he would not live anywhere else.) The political theory supporting such a state is as far away as possible from the fevered imagining of America bringing democracy to the world favored by most movement conservatives.

Today, the nations of Europe seem largely unable to confront the fact that the secular liberalism they have relied on for so long was only tenable because it rested on a foundation, however shaky, of its own non-liberal religious and cultural traditions. This German decision, and others like it that are sure to come, give us a glimpse into the abyss that opens when those traditions are forgotten. ■

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Arts & Letters

FILM

[Chalk]

Failing Public Schools Need a New Script

By Steve Sailer

ALTHOUGH THE AVERAGE studio film cost \$100.3 million to make and market in 2006, "Chalk," a sympathetic mockumentary about high-school teachers by two teachers, demonstrates that competent, insightful films don't have to be expensive. Yet while less than 0.5 percent of the typical Hollywood budget, "Chalk" still cost somewhere around \$5,000 per minute, suggesting that even with digital video, filmmaking remains a do-it-yourself undertaking only for the richest or most impassioned.

The fictional premise of "Chalk" is that a documentary crew follows four young Texas educators to find out why half of all teachers quit the profession within their first three years on the job.

Hollywood screenwriters routinely regale us with uplifting tales, such as last winter's Hilary Swank drama "Freedom Writers," of teachers who rebel against what President Bush denounced as "the soft bigotry of low expectations" and inspire their impoverished students to prodigious accomplishments. In this gentle but unromanticized movie, however, the teachers view the students as similar to the constantly malfunctioning office photocopier: just another frustration of the job.

"Chalk's" main characters are two contrasting history teachers. Mr. Lowery, a shy former computer engineer, knows and cares about American history but is treated by his students with disdain until he lowers himself to their level by using his nerd skills to win a spelling bee where students quiz teachers on teen slang terms like "whoody" (which means "friend," in case you care, which you don't).

Meanwhile, Mr. Stroope (co-writer Peter Mass, who teaches geography in Austin, Texas) is a complete idiot. He makes his two smart kids stay after so he can privately warn them, "In class, try not to know as much as me." Yet he is admired by most of his charges because he exhibits the masculine self-assurance embodied by Fred Willard's smugly clueless characters in all those docu-comedies directed by Christopher Guest like "A Mighty Wind."

"Chalk" demonstrates something that parents can find surprising: how often even the rawest teachers have to wing it in the classroom with negligible guidance. Mr. Lowery is baffled that his students don't respond as logically as the computers he used to design, while Mr. Stroope, a master manipulator but not exactly a scholar, is required to make up his own lesson plans. When Meryl Streep goes to work, they hand her a screenplay, but teachers are frequently expected to write their own scripts.

Ironically, the stars of "Chalk" (mostly struggling stage actors in their first film) semi-improvised their lines, based on an outline by Mass and director Mike Akel, and did a fine job. Still there's a subtle weakness inherent in ensemble improvisation that has also been plaguing Guest's similar films, such as 2006's "For Your Consideration." Because the writers relinquish some control over the material

to the actors, who have varied views, the jokes tend to be scattershot. Ad-libbing can seldom achieve the deep humor exemplified by the half dozen superbly crafted repetitions, each building on the last, of the "cleft stick" joke in *Scoop* by Evelyn Waugh, that epitome of the comic writer as painstaking architect.

Similarly, satires on complex topics are less suited for ensemble development than for a single artist's judgment. In contrast to the other workplace comedy filmed in the Texas capital, the ferocious "Office Space" by the Austin auteur Mike Judge, "Chalk's" improv methodology blurs the point of the film, leaving ambiguous the answer to the original question of why all those teachers quit.

Indeed, American public schooling still awaits its own well-deserved *Catch-22*. Consider the madness of the federal No Child Left Behind law that mandates "that all children should reach a proficient level of academic achievement by 2014," a goal that can be reached only by palpable fraud. In 2002, 67 percent of all students scored below proficiency on the federal government's NAEP exam. After three years of NCLB, the 2005 test found that 69 percent were too low.

Education's overwhelming reality is that, unlike in Garrison Keillor's Lake Wobegon where all the children are above average, in America half the students are below average in intelligence. Yet because equality of outcome, not doing the best we can with what we have, is the goal, public education is dominated by fantasy and frenzied faddishness—"This new vogue must be the magic bullet that will turn us into Lake Wobegon H.S.!"—alternating manic-depressively—"Eh, what's the use?"—with the lassitude of despair. ■

Rated PG-13 for some bad language.

BOOKS

[*Alexis de Tocqueville: A Life*,
Hugh Brogan, Yale University
Press, 736 pages]

Ordered Liberty and the French Aristocrat

By Bruce Frohnen

TOCQUEVILLE'S POSTHUMOUS BOON—his continuing relevance—is also his misfortune. He is known almost exclusively for his second-best work, *Democracy in America* (his masterpiece being *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*), and today *Democracy* is more mined for quotations either lauding or condemning “our” democracy than looked to for the important observations, analysis, and wisdom it provides.

A work has long been needed that would show the breadth and depth of Tocqueville's genius, the integrated nature of his character, and how his works, especially *Democracy* and *The Old Regime*, were products of the same mind and were shaped by the tragic circumstances of France's Long Revolution (or series of revolutions) of 1789-1870. A work has been needed to bring home to readers the difficulties and analytic opportunities of interpreting Tocqueville the man, born of the aristocracy but living in what he recognized as an age of increasing political, economic, and social equality.

This is not that book.

Brogan's biography of Tocqueville has been decades in the making, and Brogan seems to consider Tocqueville a kind of intimate friend. Unfortunately, the result is less an intimate portrait than a scolding, akin to what one might receive from an older brother disappointed that one has not lived up to one's potential. That outcome is doubly sad because

Tocqueville's perspective far surpasses, in terms of wisdom, honor, and the enrichment of our civilization, the opinions Brogan chides him for not having.

Brogan alternately castigates Tocqueville for holding aristocratic views and delivers faint praise for his limited “progressivism”—urging us to see in him a hesitant precursor to Karl Marx. These ideologically inspired anachronisms are all the more frustrating because Brogan, on occasion, seems to recognize their artificiality, indeed incongruity with Tocqueville's actual positions and view of himself.

Tocqueville was one of the most self-aware of political philosophers. He wrote several documents laying out his beliefs and instincts. Brogan includes, for example, Tocqueville's self-declaration: “I like democratic institutions with my head, but I am aristocratic by instinct, that is to say I despise and fear the mob.”

Tocqueville's standpoint is clear enough, and it has plenty of rational basis in his experience. He was born of an aristocracy that had been more than decimated by the French Revolution's Reign of Terror, and he was surrounded by revolutionary violence throughout his life. Beginning before Tocqueville's birth and extending past his death, France was shaken by a series of bloody revolutions he, with good reason, blamed largely on the *sans culottes*—elements of the urban underclass who joined street mobs by the thousands and inspired the murderous ideology of Jacobinism. The Reign of Terror had cost many of Tocqueville's relatives their lives and his mother her physical and mental well-being. It made Tocqueville's upbringing one of fervent loyalty to the old Bourbon monarchy as the sole legitimate protector of civilization in a time of chaos.

To his credit, Tocqueville came to recognize and condemn the brutal selfishness of France's former rulers and sought a means by which ordered liberty might flourish in egalitarian times. That he never shed his fear of the urban mob (though he developed respect and fondness for the rural peasantry) is hardly surprising or worthy of great censure.

None of this is to say that one should hold up for emulation all of Tocqueville's aristocratic prejudices. He seems to have lacked much sympathy for the sufferings of the urban poor. The manners he valued are long gone—and probably more for the better than the worse. Moreover, as one can see from the behavior of our contemporary elites (even those professed “conservatives”), power corrupts classes as well as individuals. But Brogan's disdain for aristocracy is debilitating and renders him incapable of relating accurately, let alone evaluating dispassionately, Tocqueville's political, social, and cultural perspective.

We may set aside the trite whiggery of Brogan's critique of Tocqueville for making only a limited advance over “male ideology.” Still, we are left with highly distorting assertions.

For example, Brogan tells us that Tocqueville's visit to the United States “radicalized him.” This is downright silly. The quotation on which Brogan builds his assertion concerns the virtues of a “well-ordered republic.” It follows on repeated statements by Tocqueville regarding the futility of the legitimist drive to bring back the Bourbon monarchy and points to his consistent position, both before and after his visit to America, that a central goal of any regime should be ordered liberty. Brogan's misinterpretation leads him to scold Tocqueville twice: once for studying only the upper houses of various legislatures (thus betraying his aristocratic prejudices) and again for “relaps[ing] into a sort of legitimism” upon returning to France. The substance of this “relapse” was Tocqueville's disgust with the vulgar constitutional monarchy set up under King Louis-Philippe, the bourgeois successor to the Bourbon monarchs.

Rather than relapsing into legitimism, Tocqueville maintained a persistent dislike of mobs, corruption, and vulgar political machinations. Such attitudes may seem a bit priggish to Brogan, but they are hardly surprising in an aristocrat. More surprising (and praiseworthy) is Tocqueville's rejection of legitimism as incapable of winning the people's consent.

Brogan's problem with Tocqueville extends to character issues but has its roots in ideology. Tocqueville was ambivalent about the spread of democracy, by which he meant political, social, and material equality. Brogan demands a full embrace of the ideology of equality in all its aspects, including its propensity to produce violent revolutions.

Tocqueville was willing to accept the justice of the democratic trend, but he lamented the loss of cultural and political diversity and feared the instability and intolerance that might ensue. Much of what Tocqueville sought to protect and conserve was, in his own mind, aristocratic. He never rejected his own class, finding legitimists themselves stupid but honorable. Rather, he sought to conserve the elements of good order, honor, and sociability that he ascribed to the aristocratic age and believed were endangered by the democratic tendency to corrode social connections in favor of a centralized state. Brogan rejects such concerns as selfish nostalgia standing in the way of progress. In particular, Brogan dismisses as fanciful Tocqueville's famous discussion of individualism, in which he laments democratic man's tendency to isolate himself from active social life in favor of personal pleasures and state action. *Au contraire*, Brogan argues, we have all kinds of "solidarity" today in the form of unions, political parties, and business firms. The word "television" ought to be sufficient to make Brogan rethink that particular howler. But his ideological blinders remain firmly in place throughout.

As Brogan correctly notes, Tocqueville's works center on three themes: equality, liberty, and revolution. Equality he recognized as the trend of the age, ordered liberty as the proper goal of all political regimes, and revolution as an ever-present danger. Unfortunately, Brogan's passion for equality leads him to denigrate rather than explain the essential elements of Tocqueville's proposed solutions to the problems of his time: virtue, the rule of law, and political decentralization.

There is a debate among scholars as to whether Tocqueville's attachment to these three elements, necessary for ordered liberty, show him to be a conservative or rather an aristocratic liberal. Tocqueville considered himself "a liberal of a new kind." What this means precisely is unclear, though it certainly has something to do with Tocqueville's insistence that liberty must be orderly and must respect the rights and contributions of the old aristocracy. The incoherence of current scholarly and ideological discourse probably renders debate on such labels unhelpful. But Brogan does a disservice to Tocqueville and his readers by treating what Tocqueville saw as the essential elements of a good political order, and a good life, with contempt.

Tocqueville's call for virtue, Brogan haughtily informs us, is simply the pining of a depressed aristocrat for the utopia of a nonexistent past. As for the rule of law, Brogan discusses it only in the context of Tocqueville's insistence that liberty requires order. And order, in Brogan's view, is simply rule by the rich. "Liberty under law," Brogan asserts, was Tocqueville's "slogan." And the "law" was "the one protecting property." The answer to democracy's problems cannot be order, according to Brogan, because "liberty can be, and often must be, destructive." The French Revolution, which Tocqueville abhorred in its full flowering, was for Brogan a good and necessary wiping away of a corrupt past.

Perhaps most problematic are Brogan's repeated claims that Tocqueville was not serious about the final and most politically relevant element by which he would have us address the problem of equality—decentralization.

Tocqueville insisted throughout his career that intermediary institutions, be they rooted in class, religion, or geography, are central to the maintenance of ordered liberty. We learn to deal with one another as full human beings, sharing goals as well as customs and manners, through interaction at the local level and find protection in

our local associations from the powers of a centralized regime. This is especially important in democratic societies, with their drive to stamp out liberty in the name of equality. Brogan's claim? Tocqueville didn't really mean any of this because he didn't discuss the role of the Catholic Church as an intermediary institution. But Tocqueville did write on this topic—as part of his argument for a greater separation between church and state, a separation that would free the church to take on its necessary intermediary role.

Brogan clearly disagrees with Tocqueville's view that decentralization is indispensable for any good, free society. Tocqueville receives his harshest scolding for opposing various schemes of state-supported welfare programs. It may well be that Tocqueville was wrong for not seeing the need for greater public assistance, particularly given the sufferings brought on by France's industrialization. But Brogan does not disagree with Tocqueville's argument—he dismisses it as unserious.

Tocqueville's analysis of the problems of administrative centralization remains crucial to any wise political science. He did not claim that all attempts to aid the poor are unwise. Rather, he argued that any program of public concern that is planned and carried out from the political center risks sapping the strength and resolve of localities, undermining them by taking away important reasons for their existence. This is a lesson anyone who looks at the development of Western political, economic, and social institutions should consider. Jouvenel, Nisbet, and a host of other thinkers have followed Tocqueville in this. Brogan's easy dismissal of this argument opens him up to the charge of lacking seriousness himself as a commentator on the thought of one of the greatest minds of the modern era. ■

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[*Unhooked: How Young Women Pursue Sex, Delay Love, and Lose at Both*, Laura Sessions Stepp, Riverhead, 304 pages]

Do You Know Where Your Parents Are?

By Cheryl Miller

ACCORDING TO HER CRITICS, Laura Sessions Stepp wants to lead young women back to Stepford. *Salon* blasted Stepp's new book, *Unhooked: How Young Women Pursue Sex, Delay Love, and Lose at Both*, as a "50s-style handbook on appropriate femininity." "*Unhooked* makes sex into a bigger, scarier, and more dangerous thing than it already is," writes *Slate*'s Meghan O'Rourke, condemning Stepp's "alarmism." In the *Washington Post*, Kathy Dobie charged Stepp with trying "to instill sexual shame" in young women. By refusing to make sex "precious," Dobie asserts, today's young women put "simple humanity back into sex."

These charges are ironic since Stepp's book is, above all, a plea for more humanity in sexual relations. The sex described in *Unhooked* resembles nothing so much as a Hobbesian "war of all against all." One male college student boasts to Stepp that he keeps a tally of his sex partners in his wallet along with a note: "Toss the bitches." Young women don't seem to mind this attitude. "Sex is just something you should experience, like drugs," one high schooler, Anna, tells Stepp. Women rack up conquests just as callously as men do. It's "all about getting/hooking up with the hottest, most well-known guys, and girls will spend a lot of time strategizing and manipulating their way into getting those guys," says Sienna, another high schooler. Anna tells Stepp she is careful not to divulge her crushes even to her friends: "If you mention you think a guy is hot, your friend may be, 'Oh, he is hot. I'm gonna go get with him.'"

For anyone who has been living under a rock for the last two decades, "hooking up" denotes anything from kissing to intercourse. In one of the more amusing sections of her book, Stepp asks college students to define this deliberately ambiguous term. One student suggests "random oral sex," which leaves her professor aghast. "What the hell does that mean?" he asks Stepp after class. "You walk into the student union and say 'I'll pick every third boy or girl I see'?" Judging from the collected anecdotes in *Unhooked*, the answer is yes.

Stepp, a reporter at the *Washington Post*, follows three high-school girls and six college women through a year in their lives, recording their sexual behavior. Given the denunciations of her critics, you'd think Stepp uncovered something new or controversial. But the hook-up culture is old news. Two years ago, Ariel Levy's broadside against "raunch culture," *Female Chauvinist Pigs*, argued that feminism—with its idea of promiscuity as "sexual empowerment"—has freed women to become as coarse as men. And they've taken up the invitation. Girls pride themselves on being "lady pimps," calling boys "my

Awkward as she may be at times, Stepp adds to an already well documented social trend—making charges of "alarmism" less than credible. Moreover, far from trying to shame the young women she encounters, Stepp is altogether too forgiving of her subjects. These privileged young women—who, Stepp repeatedly assures us, are brainy, beautiful, and confident as well as top students and athletes—are actually incredibly stupid and shallow.

The aforementioned Anna likes to think of herself as independent but mindlessly follows her peers around, even giving one boy a "hand job" so as not to seem "weird." Then there's the vapid Sienna—a high-school sophomore and spoiled brat—who boasts, "One guy told me I am one of the top five hottest girls in high school. I might suck at school. But I'm hot."

Stepp also introduces us to Shaida, a college sophomore and campus provocateur who thinks her Naomi Wolfesque writings about her sex life make her "serious." Ascribing great political significance to her numerous sexual pairings, Shaida is sillier than the rest of the book's subjects. But her story is

THE SEX DESCRIBED IN *UNHOOKED* RESEMBLES NOTHING SO MUCH AS A HOBBESEAN "WAR OF ALL AGAINST ALL."

bitch" or "my plaything." They pose for revealing pictures on websites like drunkuniversity.com and flash camera-men at "Girls Gone Wild" bar nights.

Unhooked chronicles much the same sort of behavior. But Stepp, an older mother of three, lacks Levy's hipster cred, which might account for the cooler reaction to her book. Some of it, one must say, is deserved. Stepp often tries to liven her prose with teenage slang, resulting in cringe-inducing sentences like "In a smorgasbord of booty, all the hot dishes start looking like they've been on the warming table too long." Or this: "Losing one's virginity ... is not like losing one's cell phone or car keys. They can't pick up another 'V-Card' in a kiosk at the mall."

sadder too. She spends most of her time at college mooning over two men who dump her once they've had sex with her, and she is later date-raped by another student.

At one point in the book, Shaida invites her mother Nasim to attend a college production of "The Vagina Monologues" in which she has a part. Nasim watches in agony as Shaida pretends to masturbate onstage. Nasim confides her misgivings to Stepp but not to her daughter. Instead, as they walk back to Shaida's dorm, Shaida takes on the parental role, telling her mother how "proud" she is of her for attending the play: "This could not have been easy for you to watch, but you really supported me."

This is a good example of a recurring theme throughout the book—the young women (and men) have been left to raise themselves. Indeed, the only people more clueless than the girls Stepp profiles are the adults around them. During sex-ed classes, teachers address such questions as whether a condom will melt when used in a hot tub. The high schoolers Stepp interviews describe attending drunken bacchanals held at friends' houses while their parents were away. At one party that the parents actually did chaperone, mom and dad spent the night dutifully separating drunken, lascivious couples again and again rather than calling the party off.

If young people have abandoned meaningful relationships for hook-ups, it's because they don't know what else to do. One student writes in his school newspaper about the need for a "three-credit class on forming, sustaining, and terminating romantic relationships." Parents provide no guidance.

Daphne, a mother of two girls, explains how she would never let her daughters play in the front yard without supervision, but she never talks to them about love or relationships. A full-time attorney, Daphne is more concerned about her daughters' professional success. She sends them articles about female CEOs and copies of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*. Before they leave for college, she tapes a note to their computers: "How much you earn is determined by how much you learn." Daphne encourages her daughters not to settle down with one man, telling them that even after she first met their father, she didn't deny herself "companionship" while they were apart. It's no wonder that both girls view their parents' marriage as loveless, as "at best, a manageable service contract."

At least partly to blame for the hook-up culture is the newly regnant culture of overachieving and careerism. Sex is just a way to blow off steam between all-night cram sessions and swim practice. As Stepp explains, "Hooking up enables a young woman to practice a piece of a relationship, the physical, while devoting most of her energy to staying on the honor roll ... playing lacrosse ... and applying to graduate programs in engineering." Today's young women and their parents are focused on meritocratic striving and professional success and see an undue focus on personal fulfillment as an obstacle to that sort of achievement.

When kids are left to figure out love on their own, something like the hook-up culture shouldn't be so surprising. And Stepp brilliantly captures the degree to which parents abdicate responsibility. We are told, for example, that Beth, Sienna's mother, is an old-fashioned, church-going Southern woman. Yet Beth sits quietly and listens as her daughter explains to Stepp the rituals of modern courtship: "First, you give a guy head, and then you decide if you like him, and he decides if he likes you."

Later, Beth discovers a trove of her daughter's e-mails detailing an overactive social life of binge-drinking, recreational

drug use, and oral sex. Beth does ground Sienna for a brief time, but Sienna quickly returns to her late-night parties without adult supervision. Stepp, without a hint of irony, praises Beth for raising a 16-year-old daughter who's still a "virgin." That may be something of an achievement, but given Sienna's social activities, it seems to be a purely technical description.

Nonetheless, the critics are probably right that the women Stepp interviewed are likely to emerge mostly unscathed from their time at college (except, perhaps, the three who are raped). They have indulgent, wealthy parents and elite educations. Irresponsibility has very mild consequences for them given all their sources of support.

Not so for Mieka, an African-American high-school student from southwest Washington, D.C., raised by a single mother who was pregnant with Mieka's older sister at 15. Mieka hardly sees her father, who insisted on a paternity test before he agreed to pay any child support. Her mother is working most of the time—at McDonald's and a nursing facility—to support the family. When the other girls jaunt off to Europe for the summer after college, Mieka is stuck at home with her philandering (and sometimes violent) boyfriend. She's not going to Europe—or anywhere else. Her peers get pregnant, and the hook-up culture leaves them without any support.

Most of Stepp's feminist critics seize on the same line, Stepp's maxim that, "Guys will do anything for homemade baked goods." For Stepp, this is illustrative of the kind of advice a mother should give her daughter regarding relationships. Even if one rejects the idea of girls' passing out cookies to win male affection, it seems far more dignified than passing out sexual favors for the same purpose. Stepp's motherly advice might be a little trite, but modern feminists should ask themselves whether it is really wiser to tell their daughters nothing at all. ■

Cheryl Miller is a writer living in Washington, D.C.

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[*The Culture of the New Capitalism*,
Richard Sennett, Yale University
Press, 224 pages]

The Rootless Global Market

By Arthur Versluis

THE MEANING OF WELL-WORN political terms is notoriously elastic, and the word “conservative” is a case in point. If the George W. Bush administration of the early 21st century—with its ham-handed attempts to expand the power of the central government, grotesque deficit expenditures, and overseas boondoggles—can be described as conservative, the word could be applied to just about anything or anyone. Like conservative, the word “culture” is commonly stretched beyond all recognition. One finds references to corporate culture, pop culture, drug culture, gang culture, and now a culture of the new capitalism. What we learn from Richard Sennett’s book by that title is that the new global capitalism has no culture.

What is culture? The word itself comes from *cultus* or cult and has intrinsic religious dimensions. Culture, strictly speaking, refers to all the aspects of daily life that bear the imprint of the society’s religious center: tools, architecture, clothing, as well as art, literature, and music. From this perspective, culture refers to the sanctification of daily life. To put it another way, a culture has an invisible spiritual sun that illuminates and sanctifies what it touches and gives meaning to daily life. The cultures of medieval European Catholicism, Japanese Buddhism, and indigenous tribal religions reflect and embody their spiritual cores.

Contemporary global capitalism neither reflects nor embodies anything of the sort. It has no sanctifying religious or religio-cultural center. Rather, it is based on the objectification and commodification of everything. In this cold-hearted new world order, no one seems to mind if everyday items are manufactured, not

by one’s fellow citizens, but in far-off sweatshops, sometimes by children or political prisoners. Conservatives and liberals alike vie to defend the multiple devastations, both here and overseas, wrought by global corporations. As Michael Oakeshott recognized in *The Voice of Liberal Learning*, in the cut-throat world of global capitalism, even higher education is reduced to nothing more than a “certificate to let one in on the exploitation of the world.”

Richard Sennett, a sociologist at the London School of Economics, seeks to describe the human consequences of global capitalism. Throughout *The Culture of the New Capitalism*, which consists of a series of lectures delivered at Yale University in 2004, Sennett follows common practice and uses the word “culture” rather loosely, making it roughly synonymous with “society.” What Sennett describes is a pitiless system in which corporations show no loyalty to country, workers, or anything other than the maximization of profit. Consequently, workers have no loyalty either. The book brings to mind those famous lines of Yeats: “Things fall apart; the center cannot hold.”

What Sennett describes in his book is in fact not culture so much as anti-culture. He meanders through the corridors of corporations and finds the denizens haunted by the specter of their own uselessness. Workers, even those in the managerial bureaucracies, have become interchangeable and disposable commodities. Furthermore, the globalist system rewards those who are the most flexible—that is, those not only willing to abandon one place for another but ever plotting to do so. In the “liquid economy,” those who get ahead are those unconcerned with loyalty to institutions or communities. Sennett describes a heartless and rootless new order.

In this anti-culture, craftsmanship just hinders one from getting ahead, distracting from the more pressing business of positioning oneself for the next move. Craftsmanship requires and emerges from cultural continuity—something globalism discourages at

every level. Already in the 19th century, authors like John Ruskin and William Morris recognized the conflict between industrialism and craftsmanship, as did Amanda Coomaraswamy in the 20th. They warned that factory production was destroying local and small crafts, handmade works that were the manifestation of a culture. Speaking of “craftsmanship” in the culture of the new capitalism, Sennett means merely a concern for doing one’s industrial or managerial task with some care. In a globalist environment, even that is vanishing, as we all can see in the cheap junk made in China that we bought last Tuesday and that fell apart today.

Nonetheless, out of this cultural disintegration, Sennett hopes that a progressive politics might somehow appear. His notion of a progressive politics turns out to be a forthright belief that, as he puts it late in the book, one should “seek to strengthen the State as an employer, rather than hive-off public service work to private companies.” And “once we think positively about the State as a source of legitimate, useful activity,” why, we can get about the serious business of the state paying “those people performing useful labor in families, mothers caring for children, adults caring for aged parents.” Perhaps that’s a better use of the government’s bales of hundred-dollar bills than wasting them in Iraq or on Homeland Security. In any event, Sennett’s book proves that old-fashioned socialism evidently isn’t quite dead yet.

One can well imagine that the casualties of globalist deindustrialization in the United States—the unemployed and underemployed—will turn to the central government for succor. Sennett’s notion that “the State” should be an employer of first resort in effect offers statism as the solution not only to the economic problems generated by globalism but also to the accompanying cultural erosion. Thus economic globalism and the growth of the military-industrial-espionage state under Republicans are to be succeeded by a still more centralized government, this time through nanny-state social programs under Democrats.

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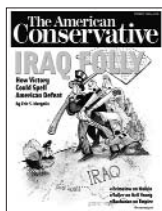
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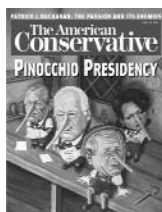


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What we see forecast in books such as this one is what happens when the political pendulum swings back from Republicans to Democrats, from one kind of state centralism to another. Both brands, the Coke and Pepsi of politics, exist within a very narrow spectrum. Republicans want a "daddy state"; Democrats want a "mommy state"; and neither side (greased by high finance) seems capable of thinking seriously about the future. Both are in thrall to the same modes of thinking and seem incapable of acknowledging, let alone addressing, the kinds of economic, political, ecological, and cultural problems that we confront.

There is, of course, a third way. This third, Jeffersonian way does not belong to either of these dueling forms of statism. It fosters not centralization but decentralization. It seeks to protect and encourage local businesses and agriculture. It recognizes the primacy to citizenship of liberal education and a living culture. This third way entails a stable currency and instead of the fictional economy of hedge funds, megabanks, and derivatives traders, encourages savings and a real, local economy based on production. It means, in other words, responsible citizenship in a living local community and culture—this is, after all, the Jeffersonian good life.

But such thoughts are absent from Sennett's book, and that is just what one would expect because they are absent pretty much everywhere else, too. Sennett himself represents the very theme he depicts: a rootless academic, he reflects the peregrinations of his corporate subjects in a globalist world, who also get ahead by being restless. Mildly critical of globalism, Sennett draws no larger conclusions. Instead, he describes a few aspects of what ruthless corporate globalism has wrought, expresses a reflexive hope for a new progressive politics, and lets it go at that. A contemporary social scientist, especially one who wishes to get ahead and stay ahead—and who may one day be a cabinet official for a Democratic administration—could not offer anything more.

The problems generated by globalist anti-culture will not be solved by either of the Janus faces of contemporary political discourse. In *A Humane Economy*, Wilhelm Röpke wrote that the centralizer's moral ideal frequently amounts to a desire to make the world into a place where, as Goethe put it, everyone is nursing—or, one might add, dropping bombs on—his neighbor via an ever more centralized state apparatus. Röpke reminds us that authentic economic and political discourse requires asking and answering profound moral and spiritual questions.

These questions are much more fundamental than anything broached in what passes for contemporary American political discourse. Here are a few. What is the nature of authentic culture? What is the role of religious life in generating authentic culture? What kinds of national policies would encourage the resurgence of local communities, small businesses, and farms? What are the philosophical foundations of contemporary political, economic, and cultural discourse? Of what does authentic education consist? How do we begin to encourage a more balanced, enduring, cultivated way of life for citizens? What is the moral significance of selling and purchasing goods made in, say, authoritarian China? What is a good life, a life well lived? To what kind of society do we aspire?

Only by confronting questions like these can we begin to move beyond contemporary American politics—represented all too well by the massed beavies of paid propagandists, warmongers, shills, and demagogues on either side—and toward the real work that needs to be done. Of course, I am not especially optimistic that this will happen any time soon. Probably only on the far side of the economic and social upheavals that await us will we have the opportunity to begin to fashion a decentralized, humane economy once again. What we need now are works that ask the fundamental questions. Where are they? ■

Arthur Vershuis is a professor of American Studies at Michigan State University.

Home of the Brave



To West Point for the funeral of Vietnam War hero Timothy J. Vogel, one of America's greatest warriors. But before I go on, a brief and nostalgic

look at another war and its celluloid version. The film was "The Bridges of Toko-Ri," after the book by James Michener, and starred William Holden, Grace Kelly, Frederic March, and Mickey Rooney among many others. The plot was simple. Our hero, played by Holden, is recalled to duty off the Sea of Japan during the Korean conflict. He is a successful lawyer married to a beautiful blonde, with two young children. Nevertheless, he answers the call. The admiral on board the carrier knows Holden's father and his comfortable situation back home. He worries about him, especially when he meets his wife on a brief shore leave in Japan. "What kind of man risks his life when he has so much to lose?" he asks himself.

But lose his life he does. Assigned to blast the heavily defended bridges of Toko-Ri in order to stop Chinese men and supplies from reaching the enemy, Holden has to ditch in North Korean territory as his plane takes machine-gun fire and loses fuel. His buddy flies off on a chopper trying to save him, but both men die fighting North Korean regulars. "What kind of men are these?" asks the admiral when informed of their deaths.

Well, I'll tell you. The Holden character, who was called Brubaker in the movie, was based on legendary fighter pilot Sully Vogel, the strongest man ever to attend the Naval Academy, who was shot down over North Korea. He left behind three boys—Tim Vogel, my friend; Bill, a submarine commander; and Freddy, a Marine colonel and later in the CIA. (There was also a sister.) Tim

was teased throughout his life for having Grace Kelly as his mother. ("I'd like to do your mother" was an opening greeting by many.) He wasn't teased about anything else, however.

Vogel became an even greater pilot than his dad. He won 17 awards for gallantry in action, two DFC's, flew 200 missions over heavily defended targets in North Vietnam, and had 600—yes, 600—landings on pitching carriers. He was the most popular cadet at West Point, became a commander in the U.S. Navy, and was as fierce a warrior as he was a

the Hanoi Hilton and looking 20 years younger than the rest of us; the legendary Johnson brothers Oliver and Johnny, one a fighter pilot, the other a chopper ace; Robbie Stichweh, the best back in the nation while at the Point; Jim Hall, a fighter pilot who volunteered for a suicide raid north of Hanoi and was awarded the DFC; John Seymour and on and on. Tim was laid to rest along the cemetery line of the class of '65, next to the pyramid, among the beautiful maple and oak trees that line that sacred place. There were very few tears. Tough guys keep their grief to themselves.

Robert E. Lee once said that duty is "the sublimest word in the English language." Yes it is, but dodging duty has now become the operative word in the

TIM WAS LAID TO REST ALONG THE CEMETERY LINE OF THE CLASS OF '65 AMONG THE BEAUTIFUL MAPLE AND OAK TREES THAT LINE THAT SACRED PLACE. THERE WERE VERY FEW TEARS. TOUGH GUYS KEEP THEIR GRIEF TO THEMSELVES.

warm and giving friend. Chuck Pfeifer—two Silver Stars in 'Nam as a Special Forces captain—introduced us, and it was love at first sight. I took him to Elaine's, we both got very drunk, and all he wanted to know was about my experiences in Phu Bai and Firebase Birmingham, like a lion asking an ant about the hunt.

About ten years ago, Timmy contracted MC, a more lethal cousin of multiple sclerosis and was given a year to live. His warrior spirit stretched that sentence by a decade.

His funeral with full military honors took place last week at the Point. The chapel was packed with heroes, his brothers in arms. Pfeifer; Dennis "The Horse" Lewis; Bob Jones—six years in

neocon language. They talk about supporting our troops and all that blather, but how many of these bloodthirsty donut eaters have ever answered the call of duty?

Some of us helped with Timmy's bills toward the end of his life. He never asked, but we knew he was in need. This is the greatest outrage of them all. While the fat Kagan brothers feast at the White House and The American Enterprise Institute, Tim Vogel needed help to get around on his wheelchair.

The blood of America's fighting men cannot indefinitely be spilled by a government made up of people who have avoided military duty and are unwilling to meet the needs of those who have served. ■

We Hate to Say We Told You So...

October 7, 2002

“Though U.S. forces could quickly defeat Iraq’s regular army in the field, there is a high risk of prolonged urban guerilla warfare and great numbers of civilian casualties.”

October 7, 2002

“Once in Baghdad, how do we get out? ... To destroy Saddam’s weapons, to democratize, defend, and hold Iraq together, U.S. troops will be tied down for decades.”

October 21, 2002

“... the administration really does not know whether there is a clear and imminent threat from Iraq, cannot prove that one exists, and resists proposals for finding out because the answer might undermine its plans for war.”

October 21, 2002

“As one senior Ba’ath party official said to me, ‘When the Americans say there will be dancing in the streets if Saddam is toppled, they are simply reading from a book they have written themselves.’”

December 2, 2002

“Wolfowitz presents Chalabi’s raw intelligence as fact. His boss Rumsfeld accepts the same unfiltered data and presents it with equal confidence in the more powerful Principals Committee. Vice President Cheney and his chief of staff I. Lewis Libby, another Wolfowitz protégé, lap it up, and the National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice lacks the personal confidence to challenge the formidable Cheney-Rumsfeld-Wolfowitz axis.”

December 16, 2002

“There is no reason to think that fighting in Baghdad and other Iraqi cities will be a cakewalk.”

February 24, 2003

“Muslim extremists who sympathize with al-Qaeda but are not terrorists tell European journalists they are hoping the U.S. invades Iraq. ‘This will demonstrate once again that Muslims are being targeted and thus will allow them to rally Muslims to their point of view and recruit new militants,’ said leftist Algerian author and journalist Mohamed Sifaoui.”

February 24, 2003

“All Western European intelligence services... now agree that an invasion of Iraq would be not only a distraction from the war on terror but a catalytic agent for would-be jihadi terrorists from all over the Muslim world and from Muslim communities in the West.”

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